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MARVEL® COMICS GROUP
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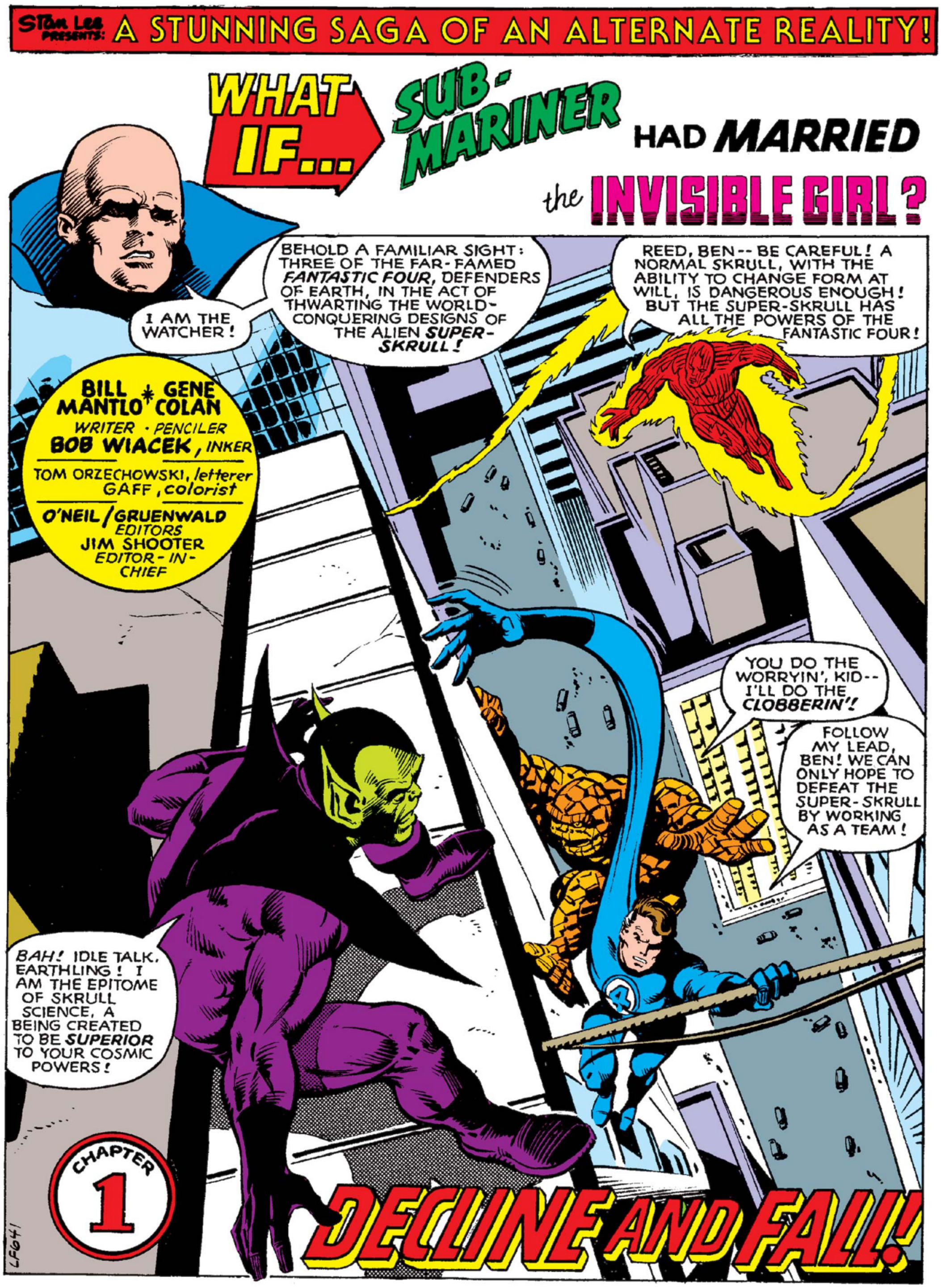
WHAT IF™
INVISIBLE GIRL OF THE
Fantastic Four®
MARRIED THE
SUB-MARINER™
WAIT! IF MY HUSBAND DIES--
--A KINGDOM DIES WITH HIM!
THE ONE YOU'VE BEEN DEMANDING!



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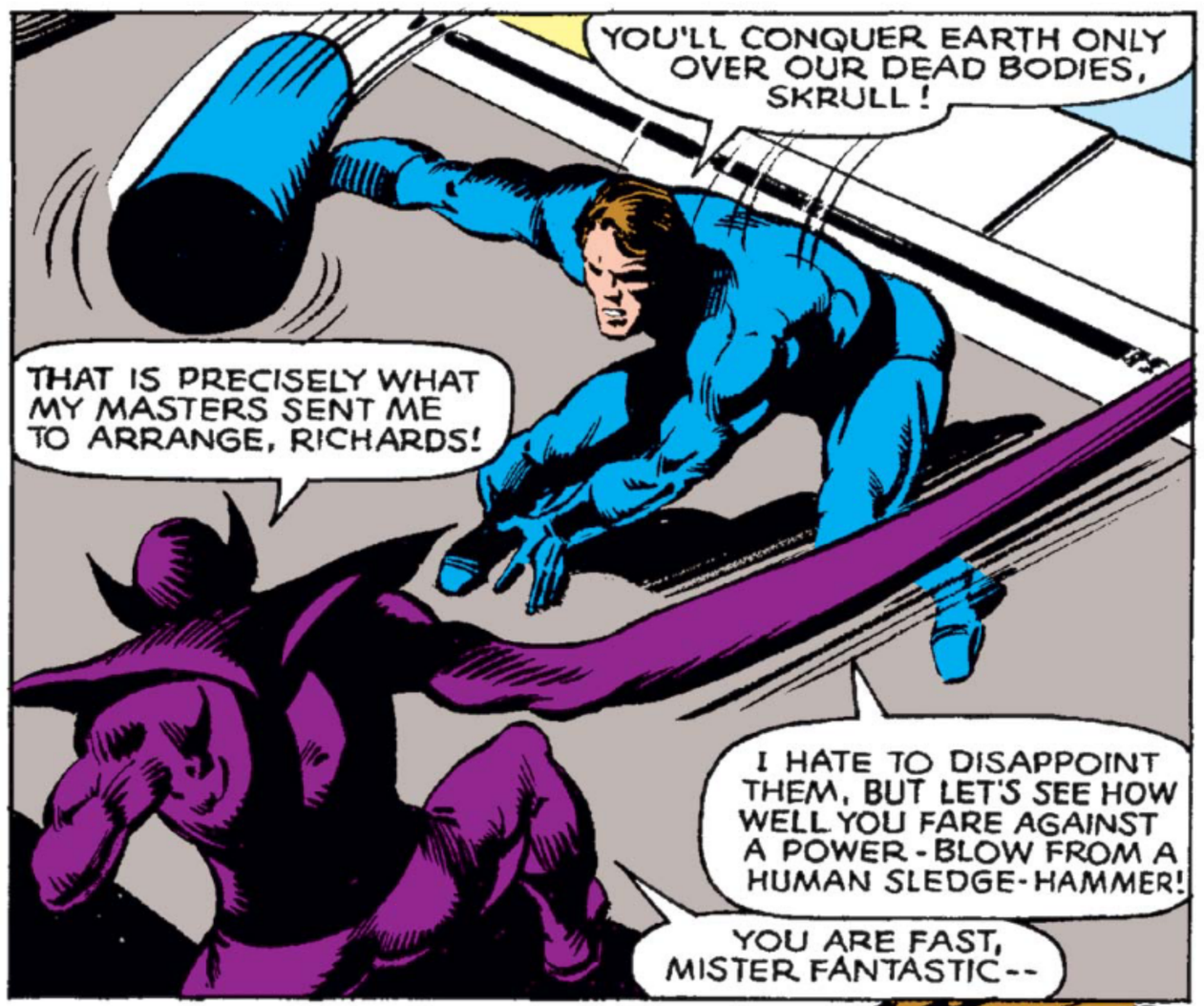
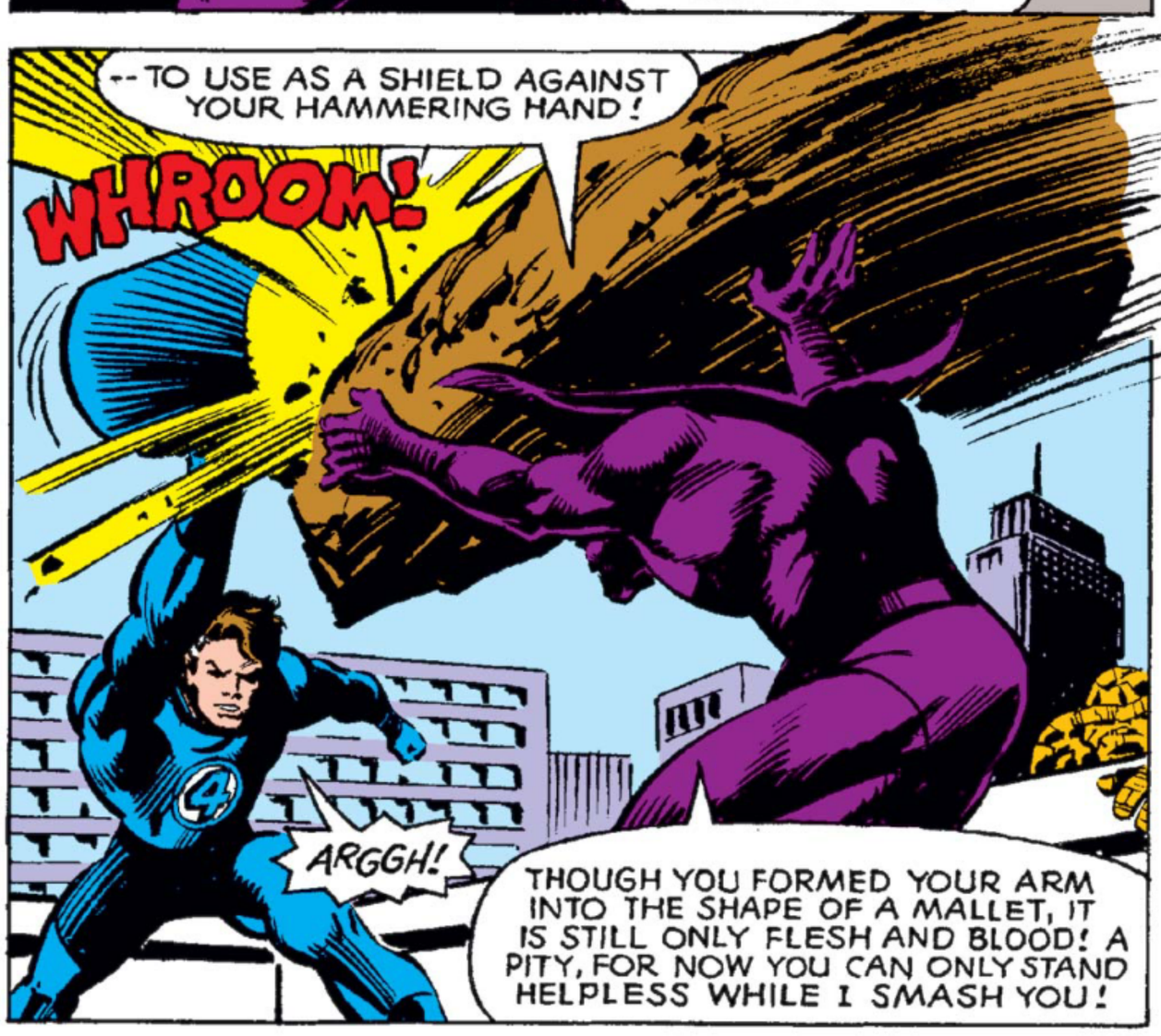

YOU'LL CONQUER EARTH ONLY OVER OUR DEAD BODIES, SKRULL!
THAT IS PRECISELY WHAT MY MASTERS SENT ME TO ARRANGE, RICHARDS!
I HATE TO DISAPPOINT THEM, BUT LET'S SEE HOW WELL YOU FARE AGAINST A POWER-BLOW FROM A HUMAN SLEDGE-HAMMER!
YOU ARE FAST, MISTER FANTASTIC--

--BUT NOT AS FAST AS ONE WHO HAS THE POWER TO STRETCH HIS ARM VAST, UNIMAGINABLE DISTANCES!
AND THE STRENGTH TO PLUCK A BOULDER FROM YONDER CLIFF-FACE--


--TO USE AS A SHIELD AGAINST YOUR HAMMERING HAND!
WHROOM!
ARGGH!
THOUGH YOU FORMED YOUR ARM INTO THE SHAPE OF A MALLET, IT IS STILL ONLY FLESH AND BLOOD! A PITY, FOR NOW YOU CAN ONLY STAND HELPLESS WHILE I SMASH YOU!

OH, NO YA DON'T, POINTY-EARS!
THE THING!

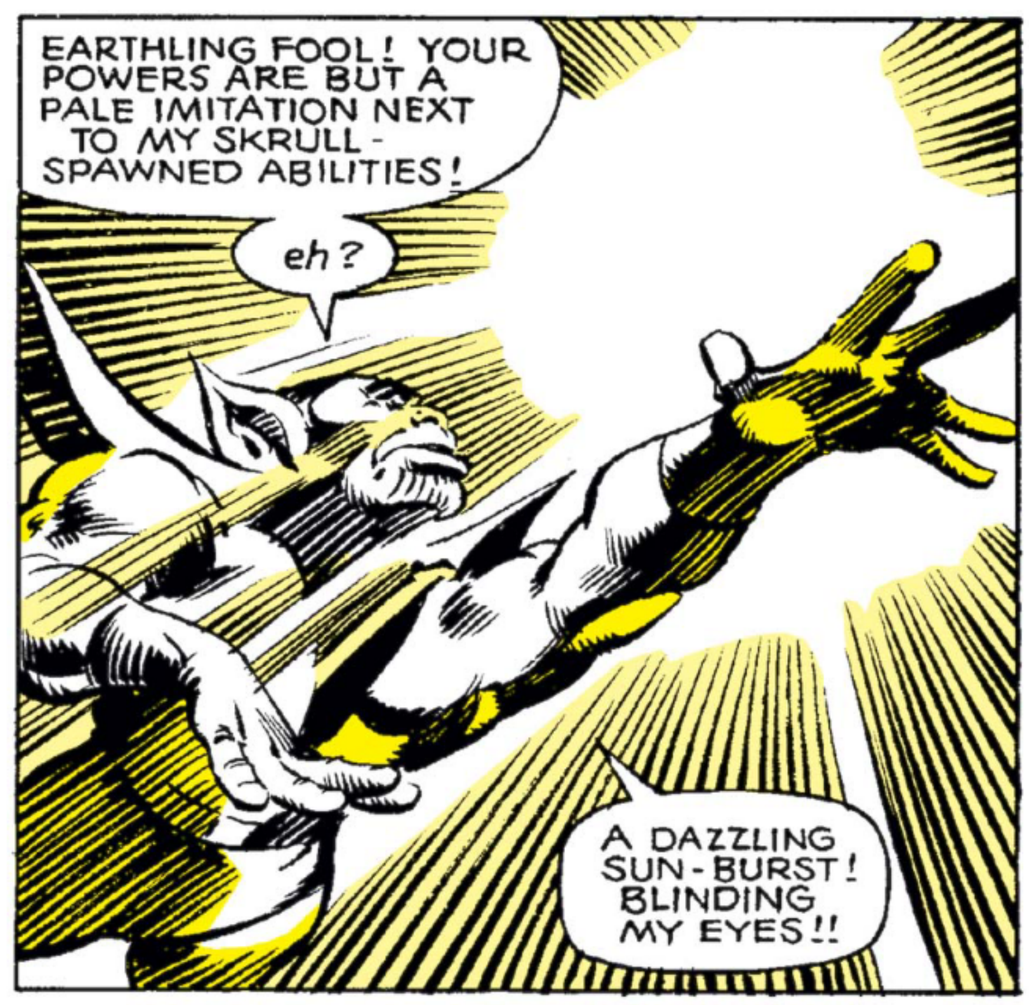
KEE-RECT! IF THERE'S GONNA BE ANY SMASHIN' DONE, I'M THE GUY WHAT'S GONNA DO IT!
FIRST YER LITTLE ROCK GARDEN HERE, THEN YOU!
KROM!

BOORISH BRAGGART! YOU HAVE FORGOTTEN THAT WE SKRULLS HAVE THE POWER TO ALTER OUR BODIES TO ANY SHAPE WE CHOOSE!

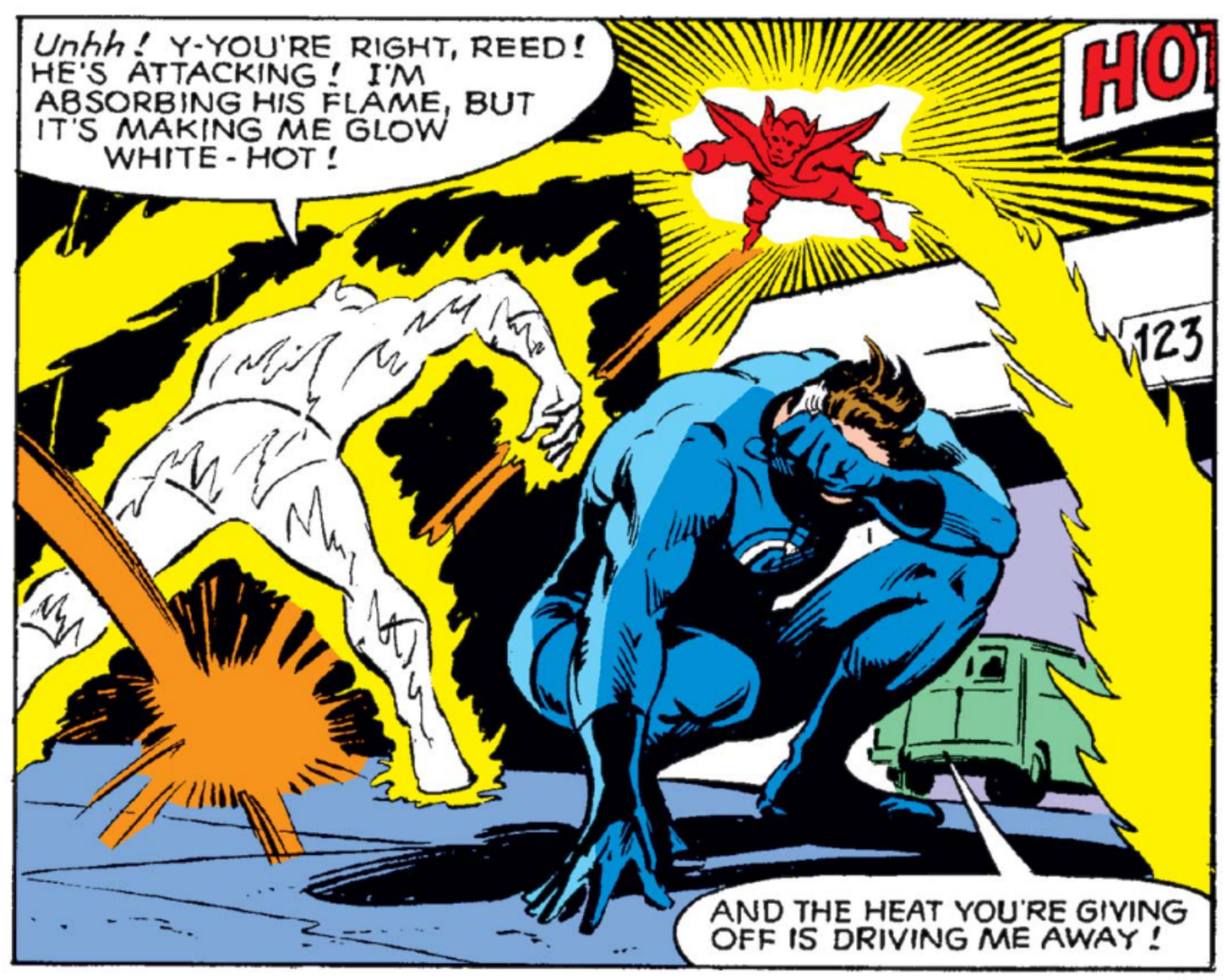
AND NOW I CHOOSE TO BECOME... A LIVING BATTERING-RAM!
AW, FOR CRYIN' OUT LOUD! REED WAS RIGHT! WE SHOULDA TOOK THE SKRULL AS A TEAM!

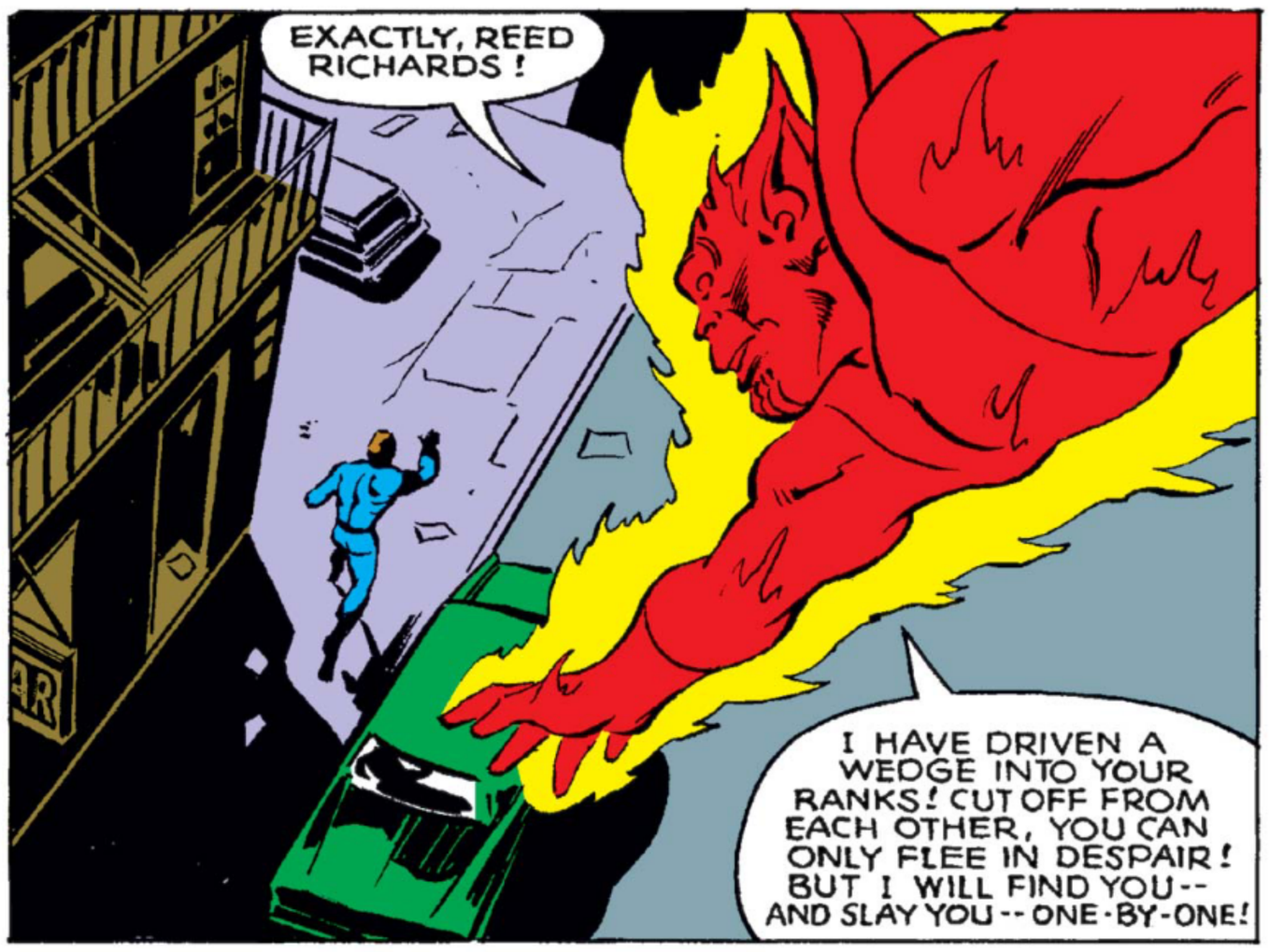
BY GOIN' IT SOLO I JUST GOT MY BUTT BUTTED!
BUT, SOON AS I CLIMB DOWN OFF THE CHRYSLER BUILDING, I'LL TEACH THAT SKRULL A THING OR TWO!

SO, YOUR PARTNER'S ATTACK GAVE YOU THE CHANCE TO RECOVER? IT WILL NOT BE FOR LONG, I PROMISE YOU!
YOU MAY BE ABLE TO MIMIC OUR POWERS, SKRULL--
-- BUT YOU'LL NEVER DEFEAT THE FANTASTIC FOUR!

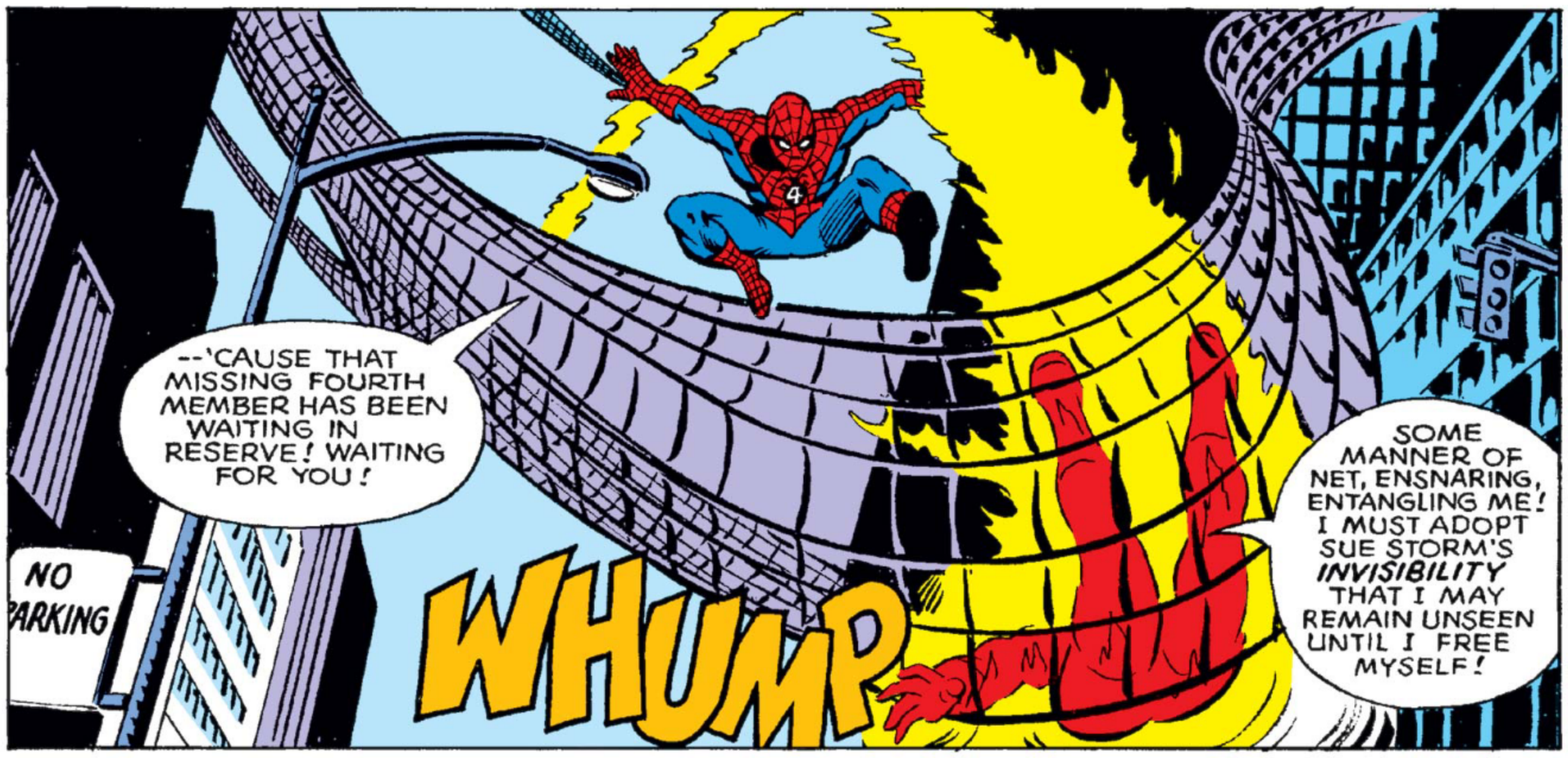

EARTHLING FOOL! YOUR POWERS ARE BUT A PALE IMITATION NEXT TO MY SKRULL-SPAWNED ABILITIES!
eh?
A DAZZLING SUN-BURST! BLINDING MY EYES!!

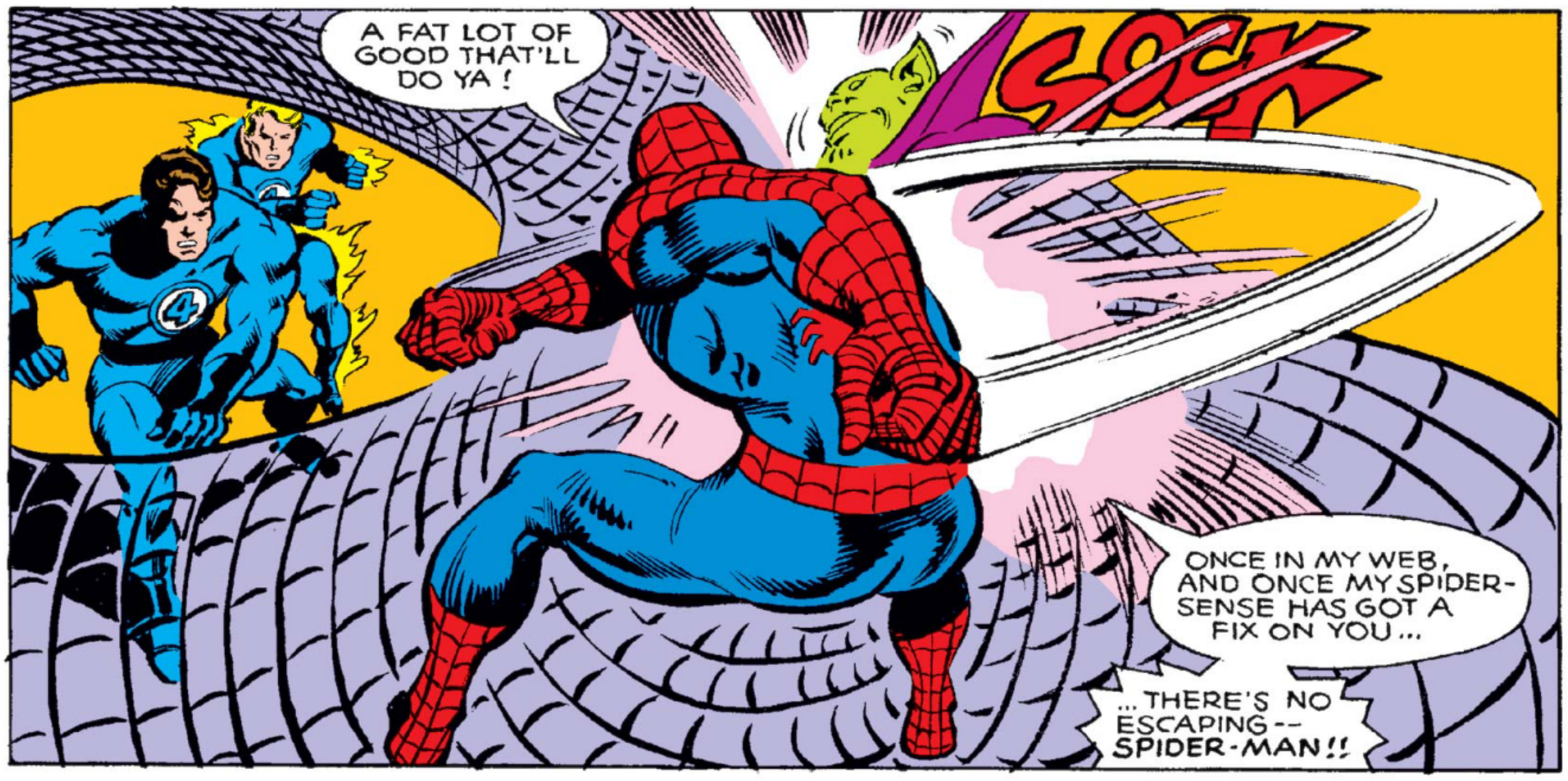
GOOD, WORK, TORCH! HE WASN'T READY FOR THAT ONE!
JUST TAKE A BREATHER, REED! I'LL HANDLE THE SUPER-SKRULL!
JOHNNY, WAIT! HE'S MORE POWERFUL THAN YOU KNOW! WE'VE GOT TO HAVE A PLAN!

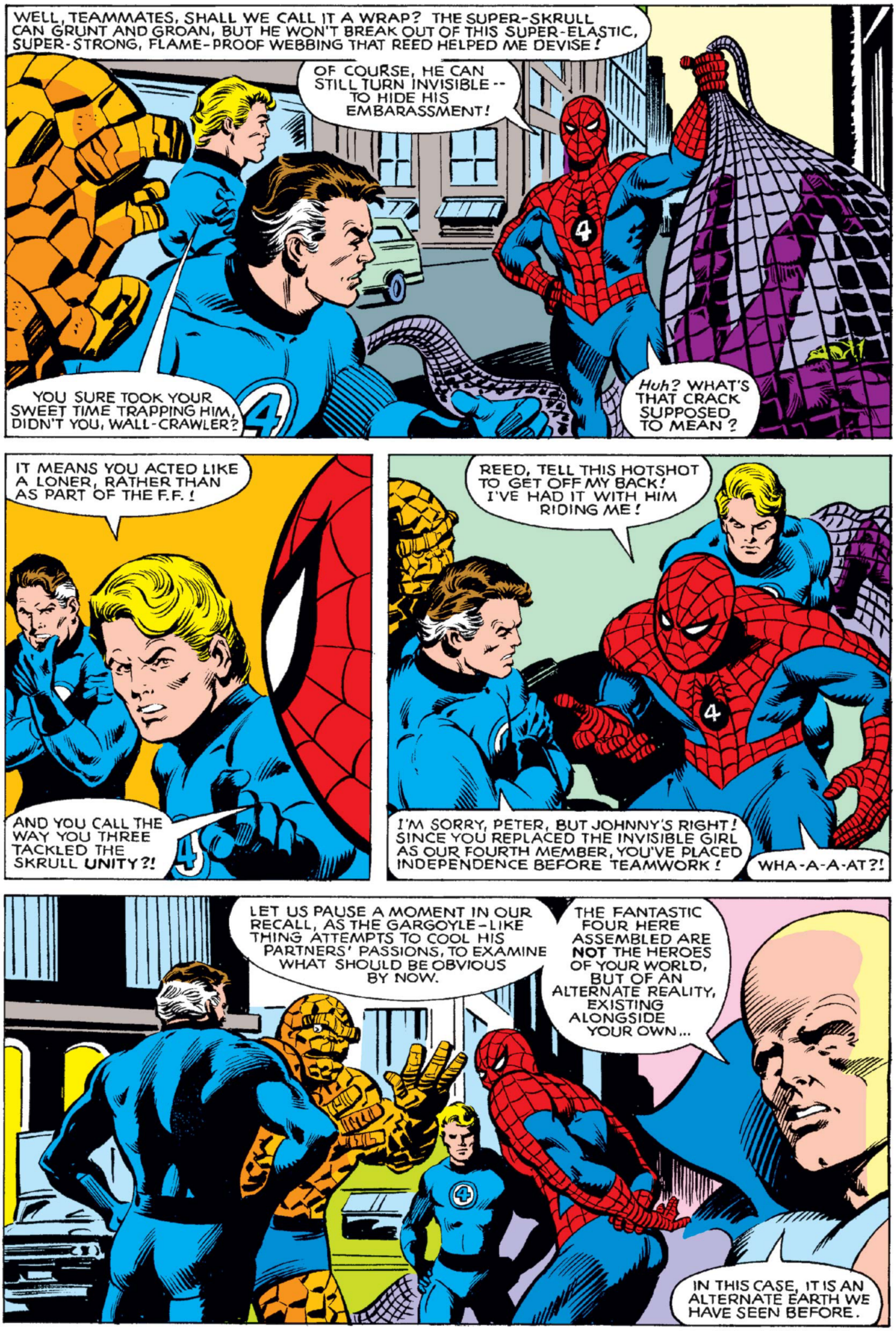

Unhh! Y-YOU'RE RIGHT, REED! HE'S ATTACKING! I'M ABSORBING HIS FLAME, BUT IT'S MAKING ME GLOW WHITE-HOT!
HOT
AND THE HEAT YOU'RE GIVING OFF IS DRIVING ME AWAY!

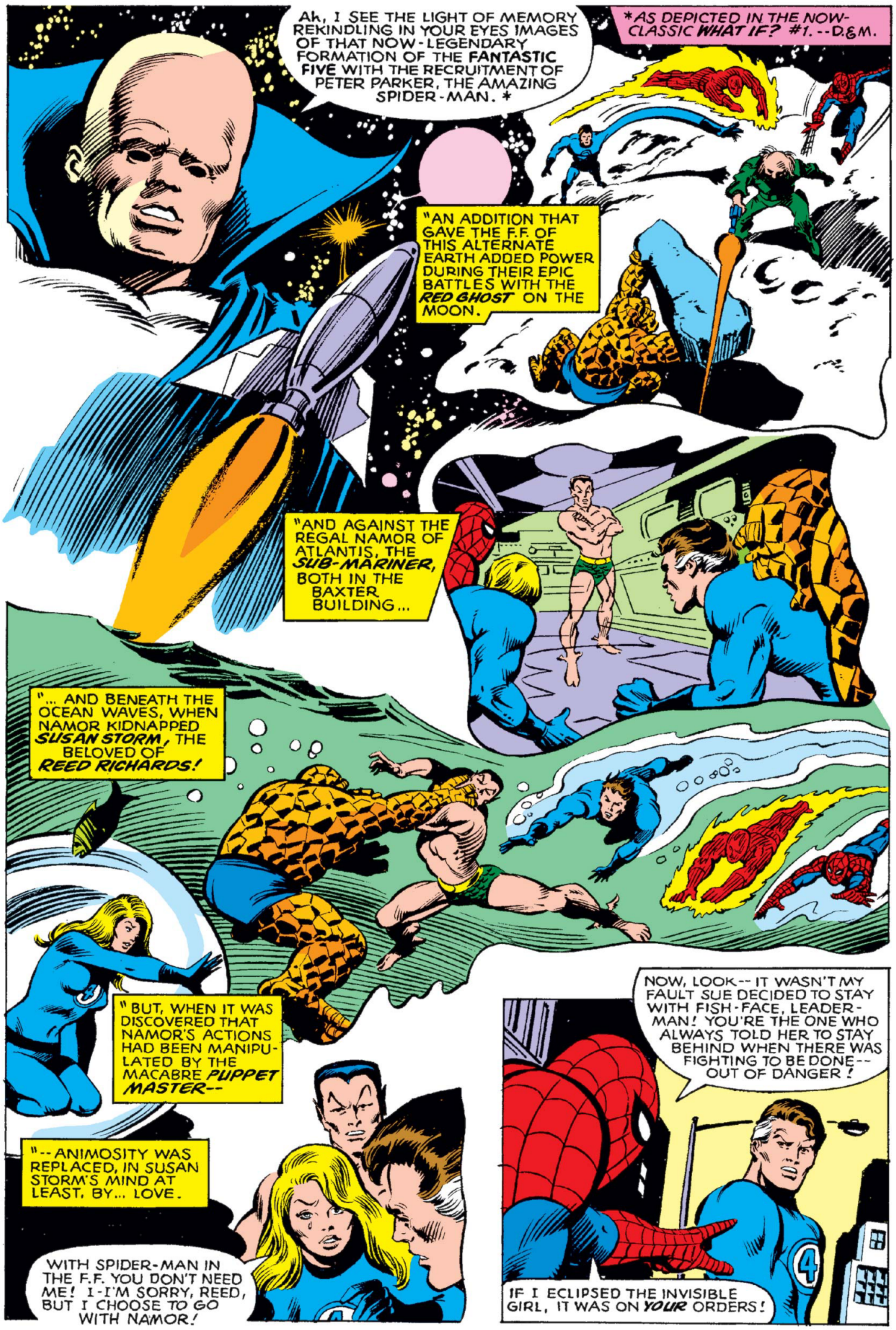

EXACTLY, REED RICHARDS!
I HAVE DRIVEN A WEDGE INTO YOUR RANKS! CUT OFF FROM EACH OTHER, YOU CAN ONLY FLEE IN DESPAIR! BUT I WILL FIND YOU-- AND SLAY YOU -- ONE-BY-ONE!

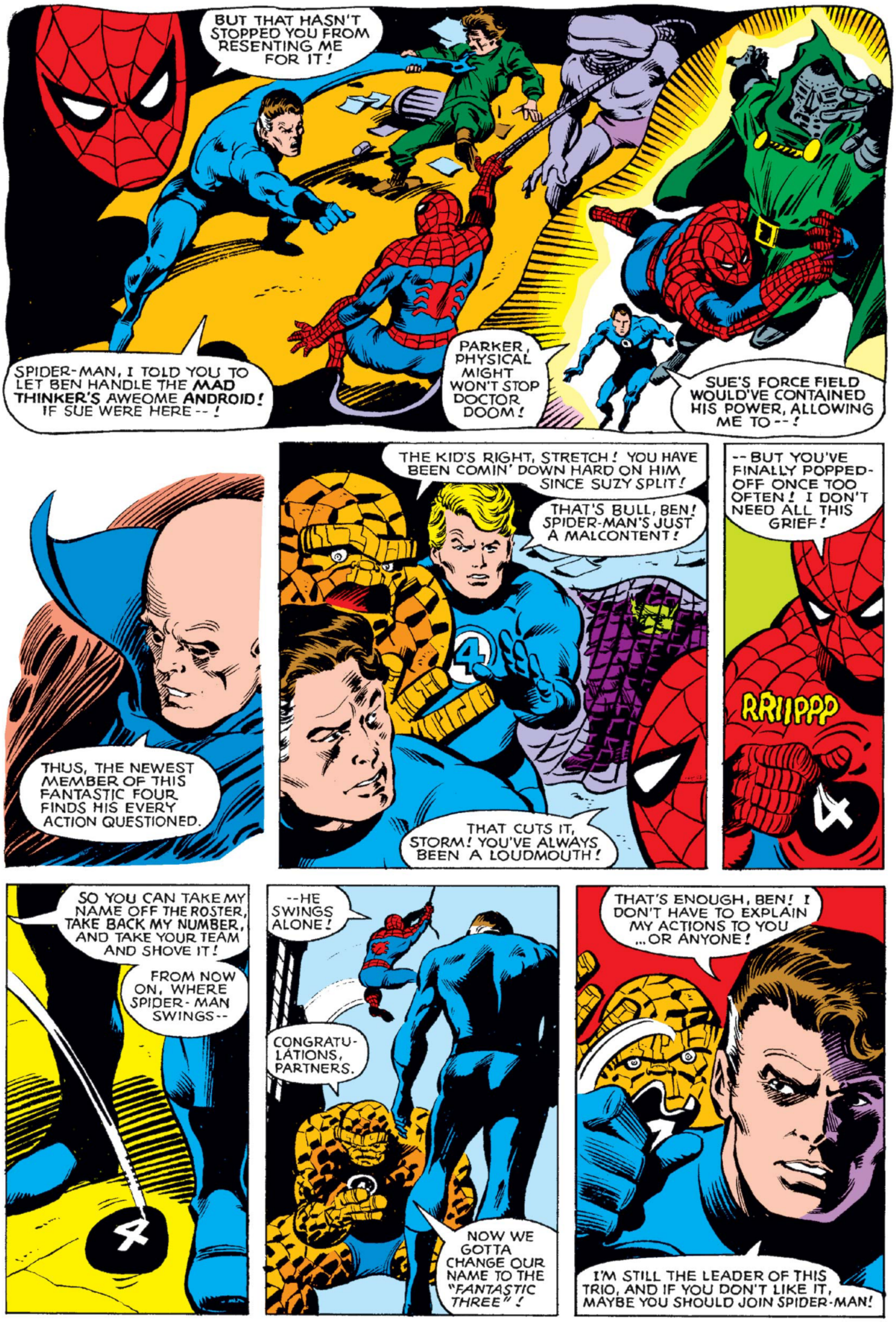
STRANGE, THOUGH, THAT I HAVE NOT YET ENCOUNTERED THE FINAL MEMBER OF YOUR CURSED FOURSOME!
DON'T HOLD YOUR BREATH, SKRULLSY--

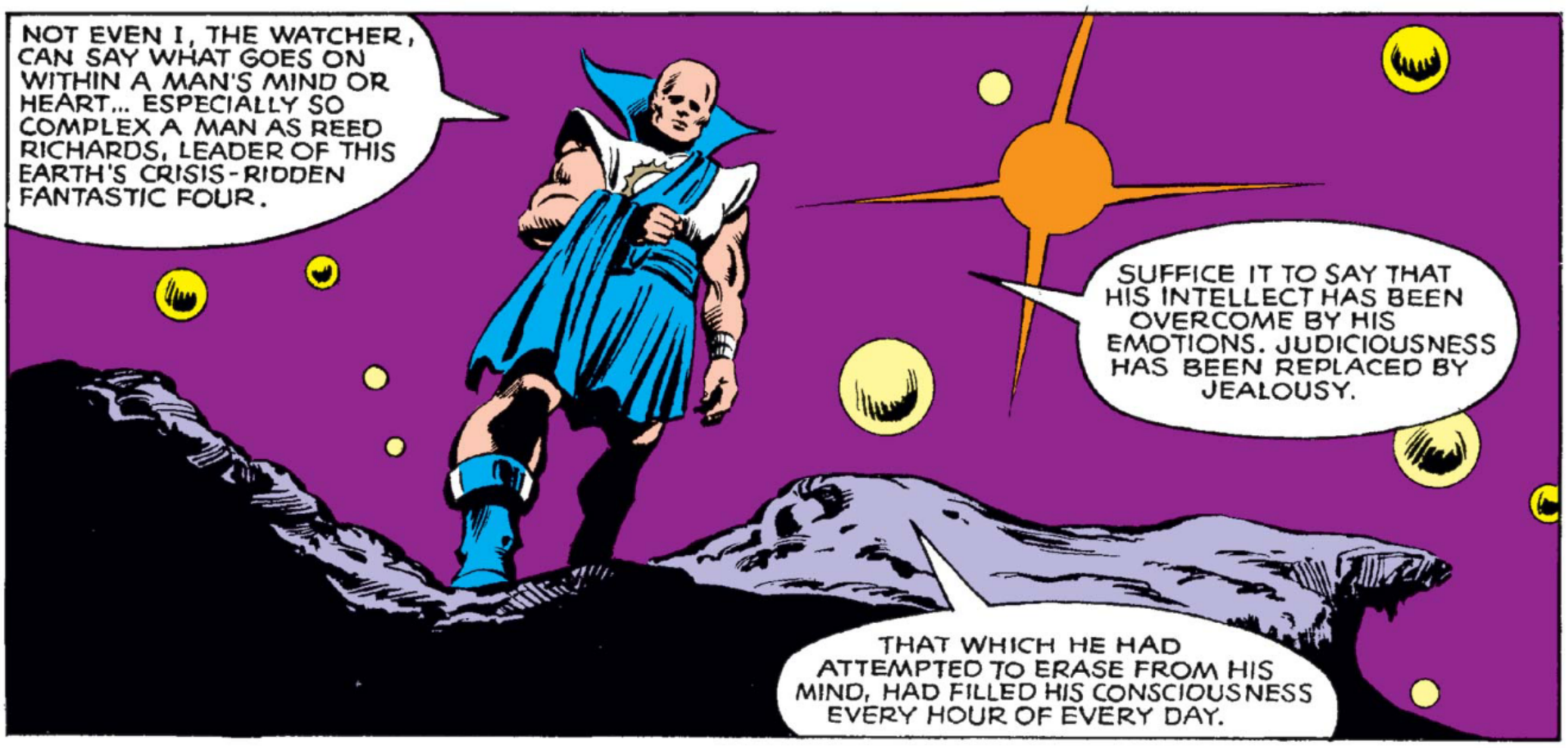

--'CAUSE THAT MISSING FOURTH MEMBER HAS BEEN WAITING IN RESERVE! WAITING FOR YOU!
NO PARKING
WHUMP
SOME MANNER OF NET, ENSNARING, ENTANGLING ME! I MUST ADOPT SUE STORM'S INVISIBILITY THAT I MAY REMAIN UNSEEN UNTIL I FREE MYSELF!


A FAT LOT OF GOOD THAT'LL DO YA!
SOCK
ONCE IN MY WEB, AND ONCE MY SPIDER-SENSE HAS GOT A FIX ON YOU...
...THERE'S NO ESCAPING -- SPIDER-MAN!!


WELL, TEAMMATES, SHALL WE CALL IT A WRAP? THE SUPER-SKRULL CAN GRUNT AND GROAN, BUT HE WON'T BREAK OUT OF THIS SUPER-ELASTIC, SUPER-STRONG, FLAME-PROOF WEBBING THAT REED HELPED ME DEVISE!
OF COURSE, HE CAN STILL TURN INVISIBLE -- TO HIDE HIS EMBARASSMENT!
YOU SURE TOOK YOUR SWEET TIME TRAPPING HIM, DIDN'T YOU, WALL-CRAWLER?
Huh? WHAT'S THAT CRACK SUPPOSED TO MEAN?
IT MEANS YOU ACTED LIKE A LONER, RATHER THAN AS PART OF THE F.F.!
AND YOU CALL THE WAY YOU THREE TACKLED THE SKRULL UNITY?!
REED, TELL THIS HOTSHOT TO GET OFF MY BACK! I'VE HAD IT WITH HIM RIDING ME!
I'M SORRY, PETER, BUT JOHNNY'S RIGHT! SINCE YOU REPLACED THE INVISIBLE GIRL AS OUR FOURTH MEMBER, YOU'VE PLACED INDEPENDENCE BEFORE TEAMWORK!
WHA-A-A-AT?!
LET US PAUSE A MOMENT IN OUR RECALL, AS THE GARGOYLE-LIKE THING ATTEMPTS TO COOL HIS PARTNERS' PASSIONS, TO EXAMINE WHAT SHOULD BE OBVIOUS BY NOW.
THE FANTASTIC FOUR HERE ASSEMBLED ARE NOT THE HEROES OF YOUR WORLD, BUT OF AN ALTERNATE REALITY, EXISTING ALONGSIDE YOUR OWN...
IN THIS CASE, IT IS AN ALTERNATE EARTH WE HAVE SEEN BEFORE.

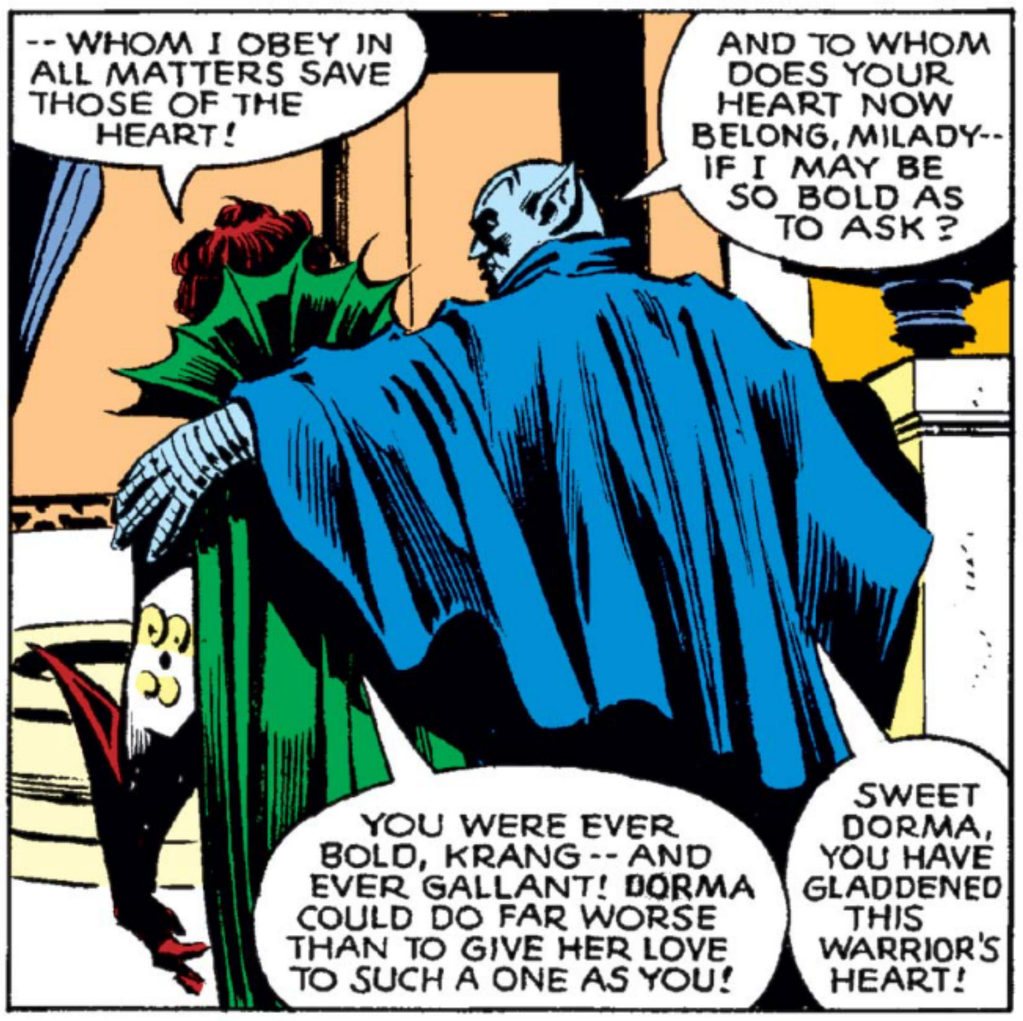

Ah, I SEE THE LIGHT OF MEMORY REKINDLING IN YOUR EYES IMAGES OF THAT NOW-LEGENDARY FORMATION OF THE FANTASTIC FIVE WITH THE RECRUITMENT OF PETER PARKER, THE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN. *
*AS DEPICTED IN THE NOW-CLASSIC WHAT IF? #1. --D.&M.
"AN ADDITION THAT GAVE THE F.F. OF THIS ALTERNATE EARTH ADDED POWER DURING THEIR EPIC BATTLES WITH THE RED GHOST ON THE MOON.
"AND AGAINST THE REGAL NAMOR OF ATLANTIS, THE SUB-MARINER, BOTH IN THE BAXTER BUILDING...
"... AND BENEATH THE OCEAN WAVES, WHEN NAMOR KIDNAPPED SUSAN STORM, THE BELOVED OF REED RICHARDS!
" BUT, WHEN IT WAS DISCOVERED THAT NAMOR'S ACTIONS HAD BEEN MANIPULATED BY THE MACABRE PUPPET MASTER--
"--ANIMOSITY WAS REPLACED, IN SUSAN STORM'S MIND AT LEAST, BY... LOVE.
WITH SPIDER-MAN IN THE F.F. YOU DON'T NEED ME! I-I'M SORRY, REED, BUT I CHOOSE TO GO WITH NAMOR!
NOW, LOOK-- IT WASN'T MY FAULT SUE DECIDED TO STAY WITH FISH-FACE, LEADER-MAN! YOU'RE THE ONE WHO ALWAYS TOLD HER TO STAY BEHIND WHEN THERE WAS FIGHTING TO BE DONE-- OUT OF DANGER!
IF I ECLIPSED THE INVISIBLE GIRL, IT WAS ON YOUR ORDERS!

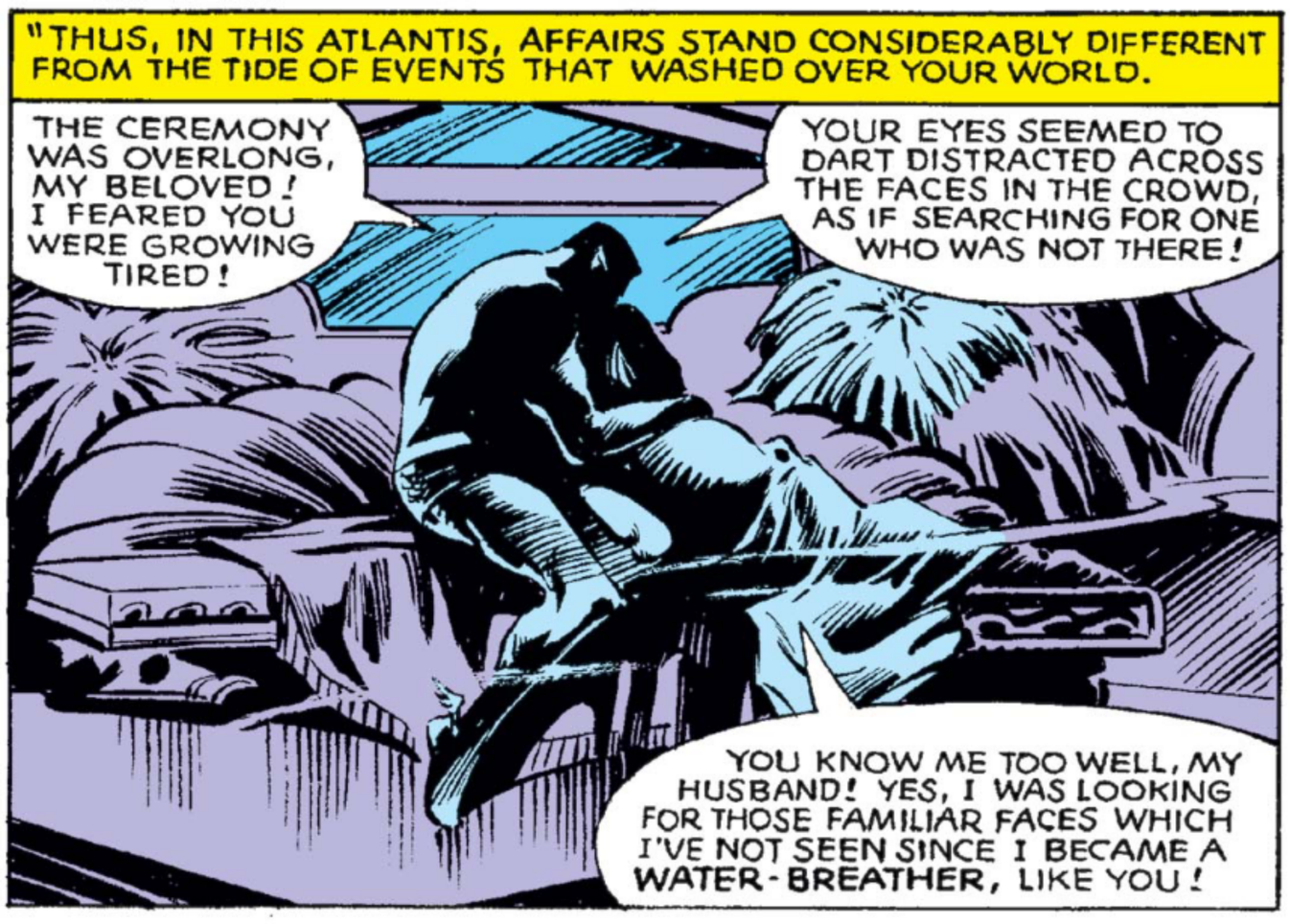

BUT THAT HASN'T STOPPED YOU FROM RESENTING ME FOR IT!
SPIDER-MAN, I TOLD YOU TO LET BEN HANDLE THE MAD THINKER'S AWEOME ANDROID! IF SUE WERE HERE--!
PARKER, PHYSICAL MIGHT WON'T STOP DOCTOR DOOM!
SUE'S FORCE FIELD WOULD'VE CONTAINED HIS POWER, ALLOWING ME TO--!
THUS, THE NEWEST MEMBER OF THIS FANTASTIC FOUR FINDS HIS EVERY ACTION QUESTIONED.
THE KID'S RIGHT, STRETCH! YOU HAVE BEEN COMIN' DOWN HARD ON HIM SINCE SUZY SPLIT!
THAT'S BULL, BEN! SPIDER-MAN'S JUST A MALCONTENT!
THAT CUTS IT, STORM! YOU'VE ALWAYS BEEN A LOUDMOUTH!
--BUT YOU'VE FINALLY POPPED-OFF ONCE TOO OFTEN! I DON'T NEED ALL THIS GRIEF!
RRIIPPP
SO YOU CAN TAKE MY NAME OFF THE ROSTER, TAKE BACK MY NUMBER, AND TAKE YOUR TEAM AND SHOVE IT!
FROM NOW ON, WHERE SPIDER-MAN SWINGS--
--HE SWINGS ALONE!
CONGRATU-LATIONS, PARTNERS.
NOW WE GOTTA CHANGE OUR NAME TO THE "FANTASTIC THREE"!
THAT'S ENOUGH, BEN! I DON'T HAVE TO EXPLAIN MY ACTIONS TO YOU ...OR ANYONE!
I'M STILL THE LEADER OF THIS TRIO, AND IF YOU DON'T LIKE IT, MAYBE YOU SHOULD JOIN SPIDER-MAN!


NOT EVEN I, THE WATCHER, CAN SAY WHAT GOES ON WITHIN A MAN'S MIND OR HEART... ESPECIALLY SO COMPLEX A MAN AS REED RICHARDS, LEADER OF THIS EARTH'S CRISIS-RIDDEN FANTASTIC FOUR.
SUFFICE IT TO SAY THAT HIS INTELLECT HAS BEEN OVERCOME BY HIS EMOTIONS. JUDICIOUSNESS HAS BEEN REPLACED BY JEALOUSY.
THAT WHICH HE HAD ATTEMPTED TO ERASE FROM HIS MIND, HAD FILLED HIS CONSCIOUSNESS EVERY HOUR OF EVERY DAY.

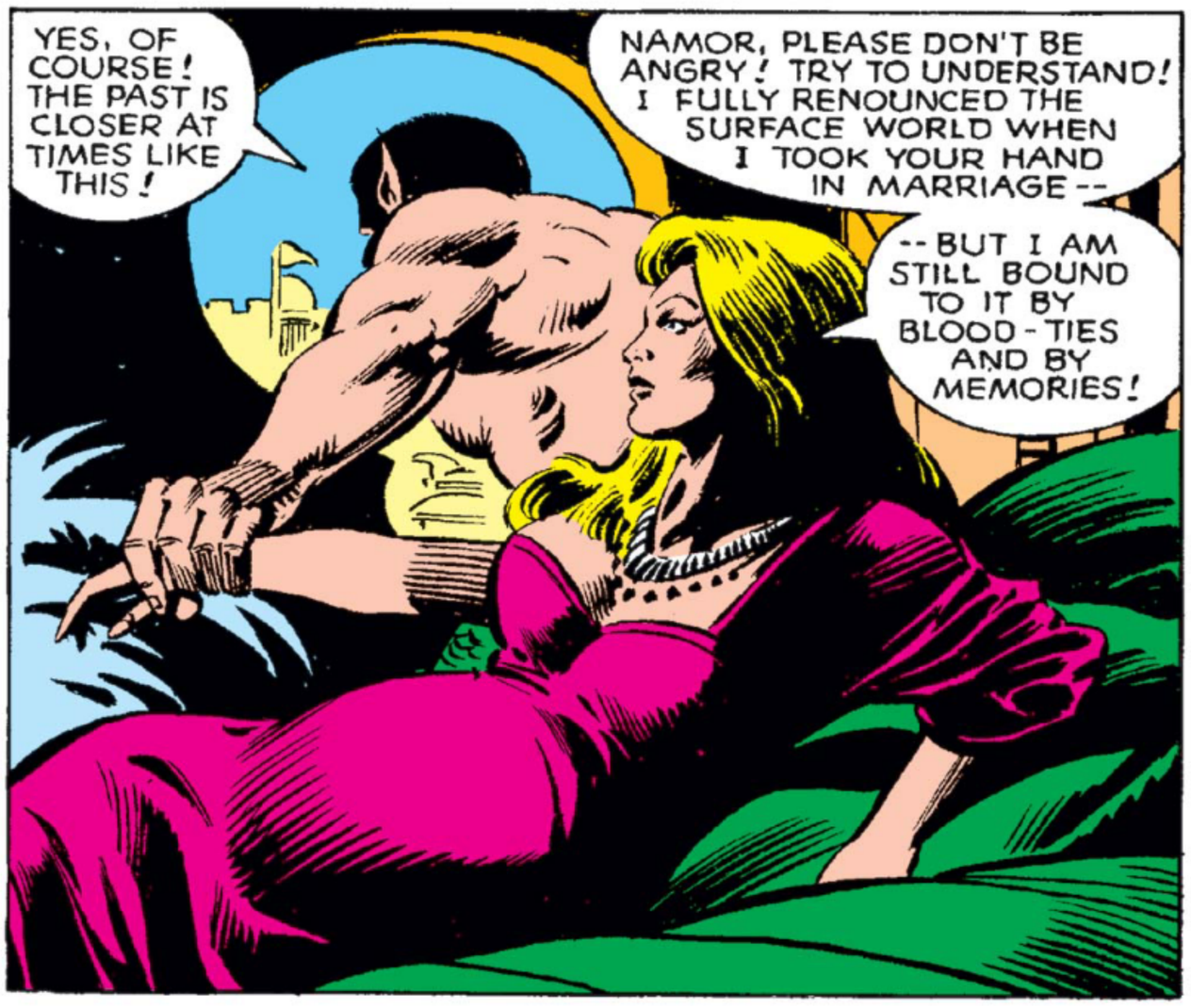
"HE HAS LOST THE ONLY WOMAN HE EVER LOVED, SUSAN STORM, TO A MAN OF ANOTHER RACE. TO NAMOR THE FIRST, LORD OF ATLANTIS...
"... HE WHO HAS BEEN CALLED -- THE SAVAGE SUB-MARINER!
HAIL NAMOR!
HAIL SUSAN!
IT HAS BEEN NEARLY A YEAR SINCE YOU LAST SET EYES ON THE SURFACE WORLD YOU GAVE UP TO MARRY ME, SUSAN, MY BELOVED. I HOPE YOU HARBOR NO REGRETS?
HOW COULD I, NAMOR? YOU'VE BEEN A MORE ATTENTIVE HUSBAND THAN ANY WOMAN HAS A RIGHT TO ASK--
--AND THESE PAST MONTHS MY THOUGHTS HAVE BEEN OCCUPIED WITH THE IMMINENT ARRIVAL OF... OUR CHILD!

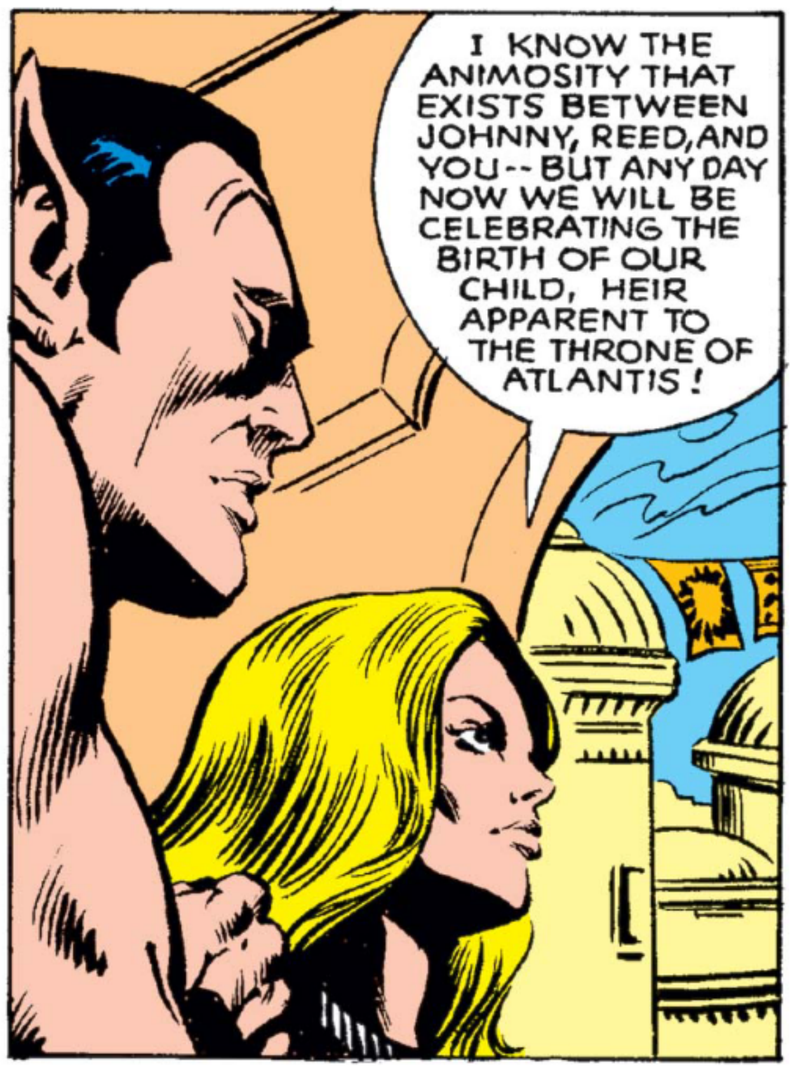
HEAR HOW THE CROWD CHEERS THE ROYAL COUPLE, LADY DORMA? DO YOU, WHO ONCE LOVED NAMOR, STILL HARBOR HOPES THAT HE WILL FORSWEAR HIS SURFACE WOMAN?
NO, WARLORD KRANG, NAMOR IS NOTHING TO ME NOW SAVE MY SOVEREIGN--


--WHOM I OBEY IN ALL MATTERS SAVE THOSE OF THE HEART!
AND TO WHOM DOES YOUR HEART NOW BELONG, MILADY-- IF I MAY BE SO BOLD AS TO ASK?
YOU WERE EVER BOLD, KRANG -- AND EVER GALLANT! DORMA COULD DO FAR WORSE THAN TO GIVE HER LOVE TO SUCH A ONE AS YOU!
SWEET DORMA, YOU HAVE GLADDENED THIS WARRIOR'S HEART!


"THUS, IN THIS ATLANTIS, AFFAIRS STAND CONSIDERABLY DIFFERENT FROM THE TIDE OF EVENTS THAT WASHED OVER YOUR WORLD.
THE CEREMONY WAS OVERLONG, MY BELOVED! I FEARED YOU WERE GROWING TIRED!
YOUR EYES SEEMED TO DART DISTRACTED ACROSS THE FACES IN THE CROWD, AS IF SEARCHING FOR ONE WHO WAS NOT THERE!
YOU KNOW ME TOO WELL, MY HUSBAND! YES, I WAS LOOKING FOR THOSE FAMILIAR FACES WHICH I'VE NOT SEEN SINCE I BECAME A WATER-BREATHER, LIKE YOU!

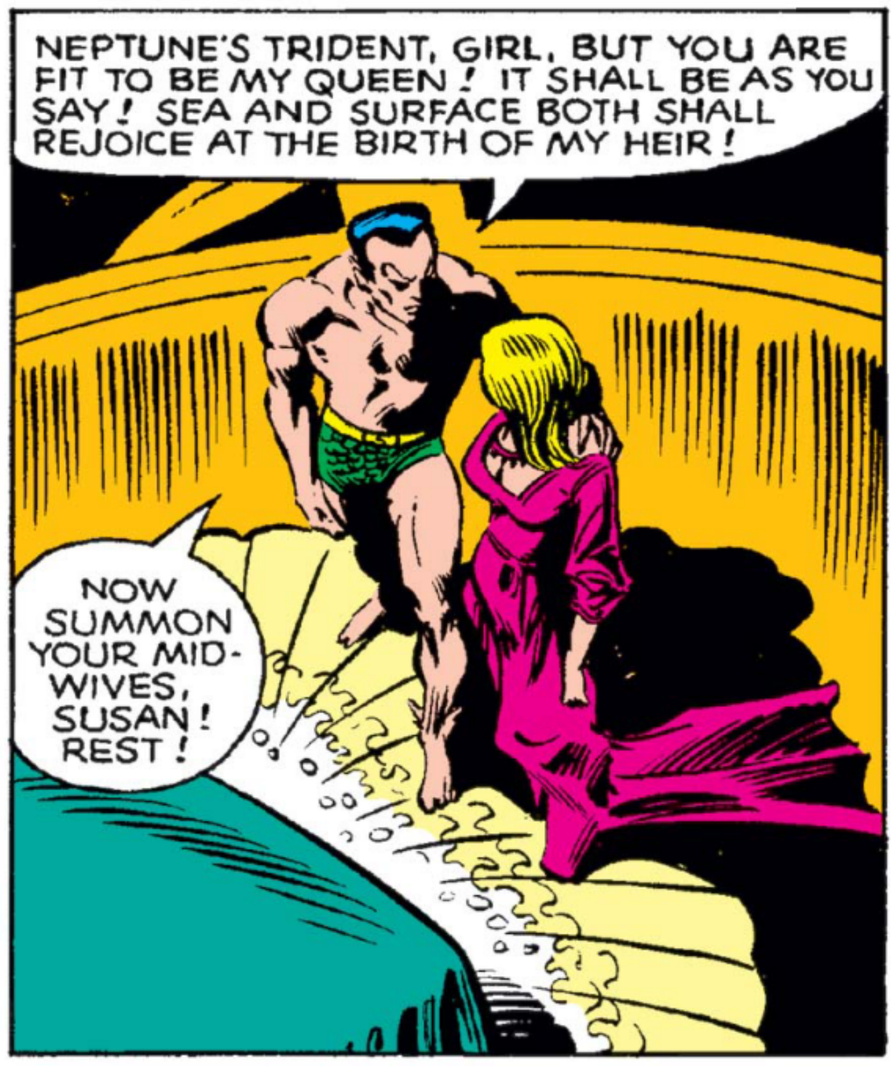
THE FACES OF JOHNNY, REED, AND BEN... MY BROTHER AND MY FRIENDS!
ON THE EVE OF BEARING MY CHILD, YOU THINK OF... THEM?

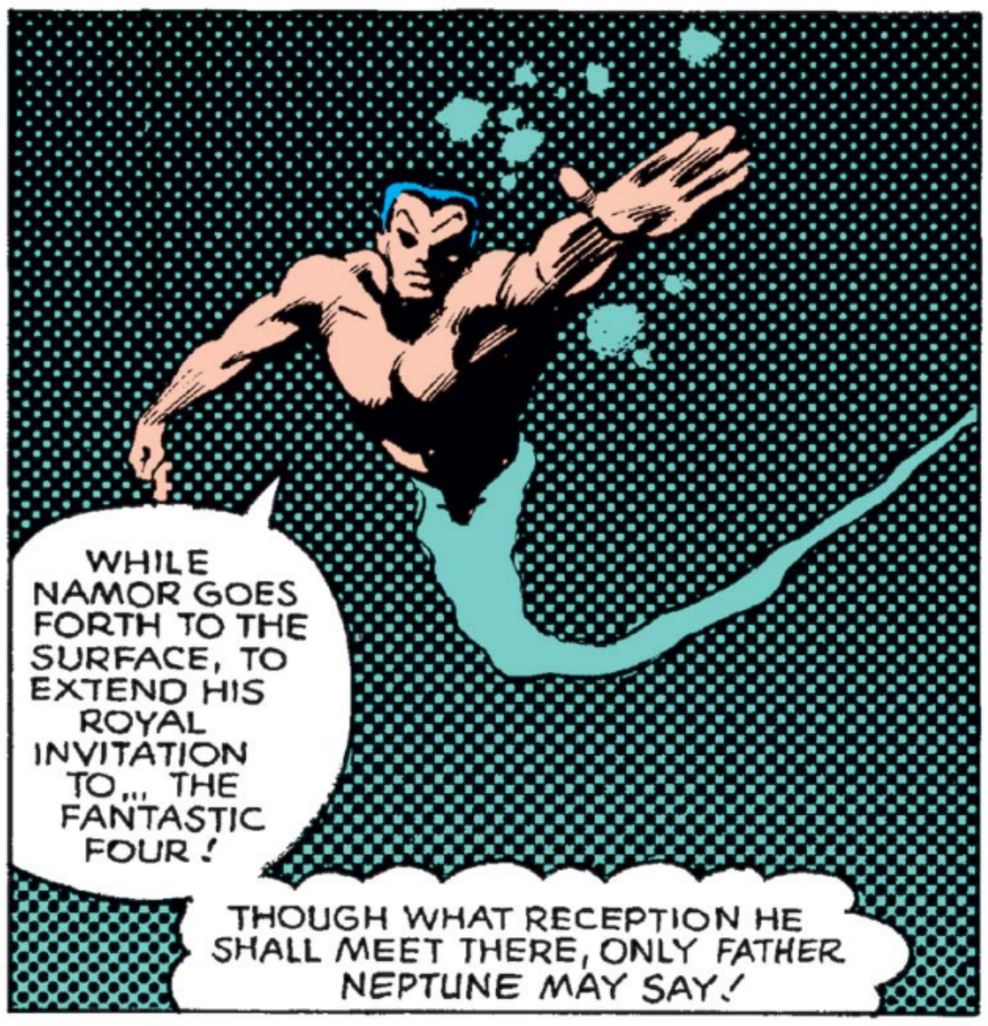

YES, OF COURSE! THE PAST IS CLOSER AT TIMES LIKE THIS!
NAMOR, PLEASE DON'T BE ANGRY! TRY TO UNDERSTAND! I FULLY RENOUNCED THE SURFACE WORLD WHEN I TOOK YOUR HAND IN MARRIAGE--
--BUT I AM STILL BOUND TO IT BY BLOOD-TIES AND BY MEMORIES!


I KNOW THE ANIMOSITY THAT EXISTS BETWEEN JOHNNY, REED, AND YOU--BUT ANY DAY NOW WE WILL BE CELEBRATING THE BIRTH OF OUR CHILD, HEIR APPARENT TO THE THRONE OF ATLANTIS!

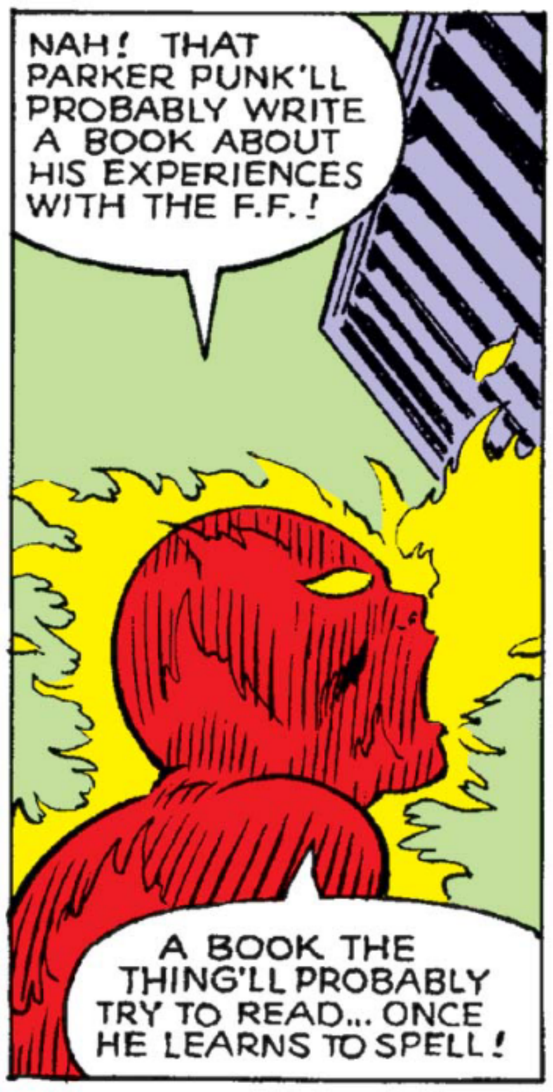
I'D LIKE THAT BIRTH TO SIGNAL A HEALING OF OLD WOUNDS, TO HERALD A TIME OF PEACE.
TELL ME, NAMOR MY LOVE, IS THAT TOO MUCH TO ASK?

SUSAN, I...


NEPTUNE'S TRIDENT, GIRL, BUT YOU ARE FIT TO BE MY QUEEN! IT SHALL BE AS YOU SAY! SEA AND SURFACE BOTH SHALL REJOICE AT THE BIRTH OF MY HEIR!
NOW SUMMON YOUR MID-WIVES, SUSAN! REST!


WHILE NAMOR GOES FORTH TO THE SURFACE, TO EXTEND HIS ROYAL INVITATION TO... THE FANTASTIC FOUR!
THOUGH WHAT RECEPTION HE SHALL MEET THERE, ONLY FATHER NEPTUNE MAY SAY!

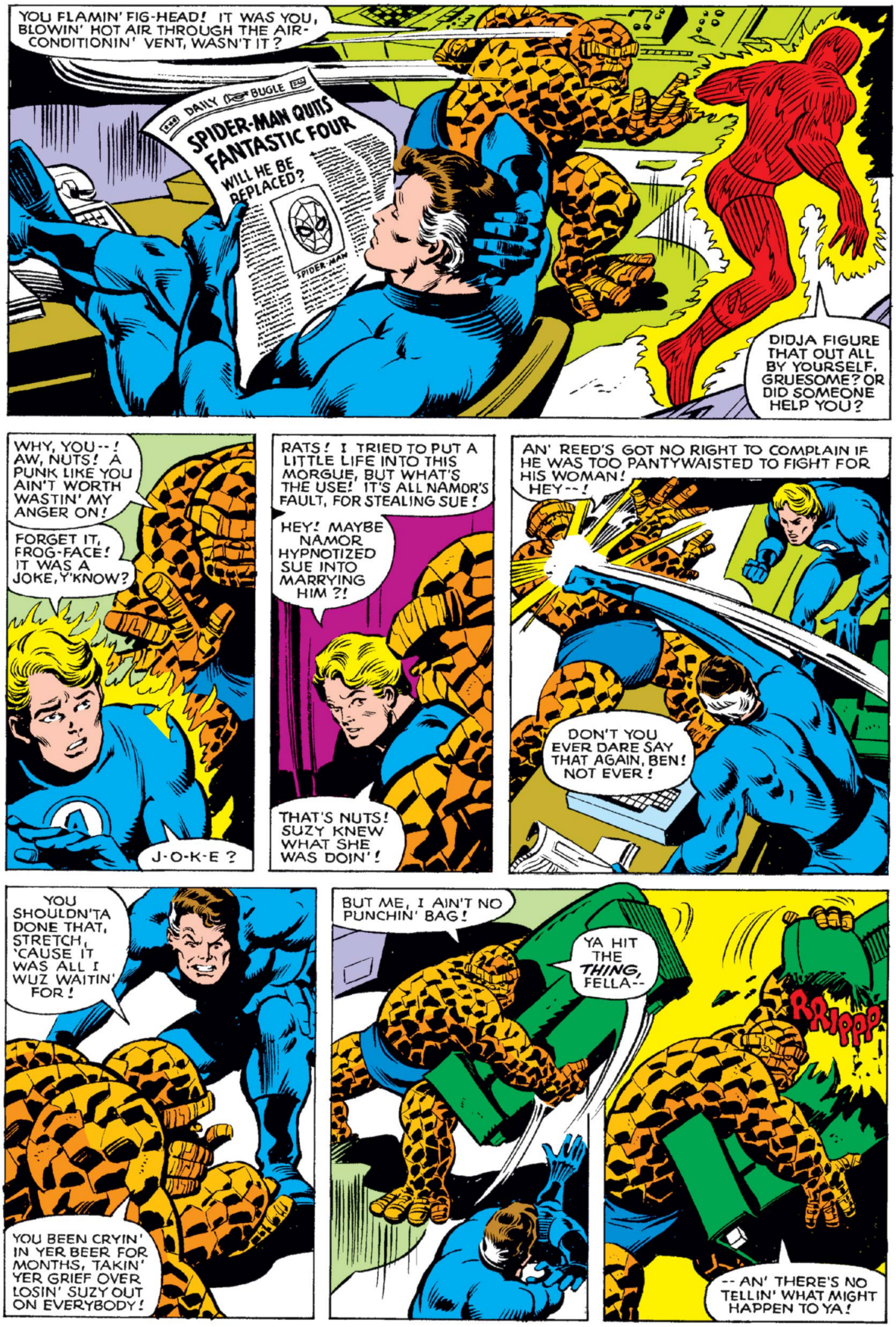
"LATER, AT THE BAXTER BUILDING, HEADQUARTERS TO THE FANTASTIC FOUR...
DID YOU SEE TODAY'S DAILY BUGLE, REED?
I'M READING IT NOW, JOHNNY.
DAILY BUGLE
SPIDER-MAN QUITS FANTASTIC FOUR
WILL HE BE REPLACED?
IT'S STRANGE THAT SPIDER-MAN REFUSED TO TELL HIS SIDE OF IT.


NAH! THAT PARKER PUNK'LL PROBABLY WRITE A BOOK ABOUT HIS EXPERIENCES WITH THE F.F.!
A BOOK THE THING'LL PROBABLY TRY TO READ... ONCE HE LEARNS TO SPELL!

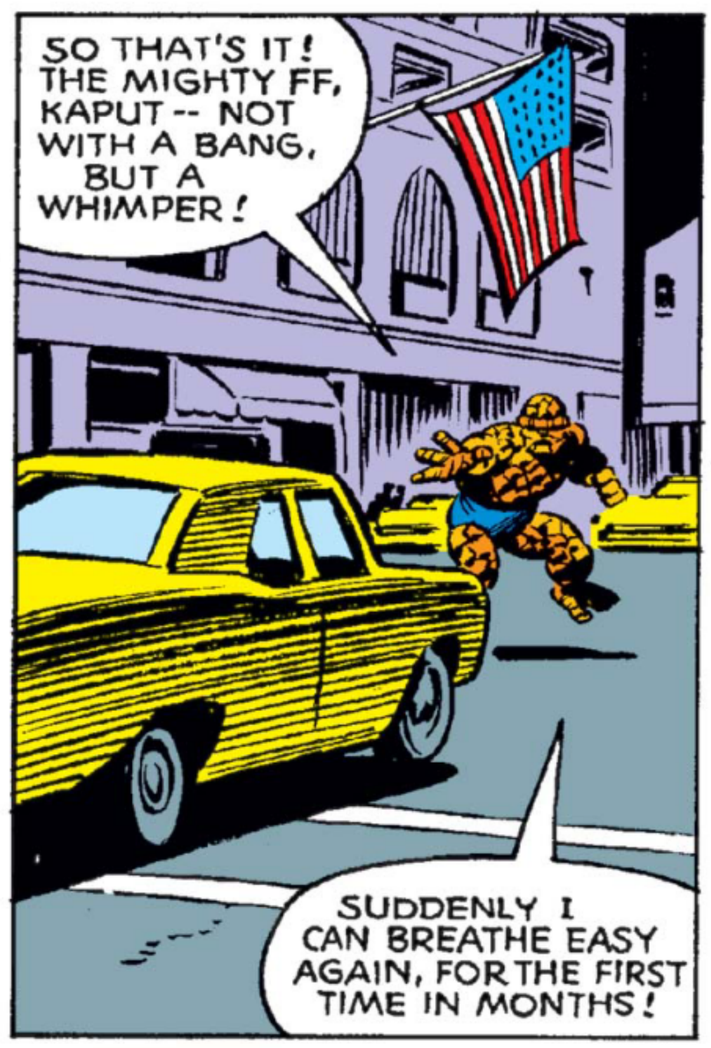
SHEESH! SUDDENLY IT'S LIKE A SAUNA IN HERE!
GETTIN' HARD TO CONCENTRATE...!

YEEOWWW!
SOMEBODY'S TRYIN' TA GIVE ME A HOT-SEAT!

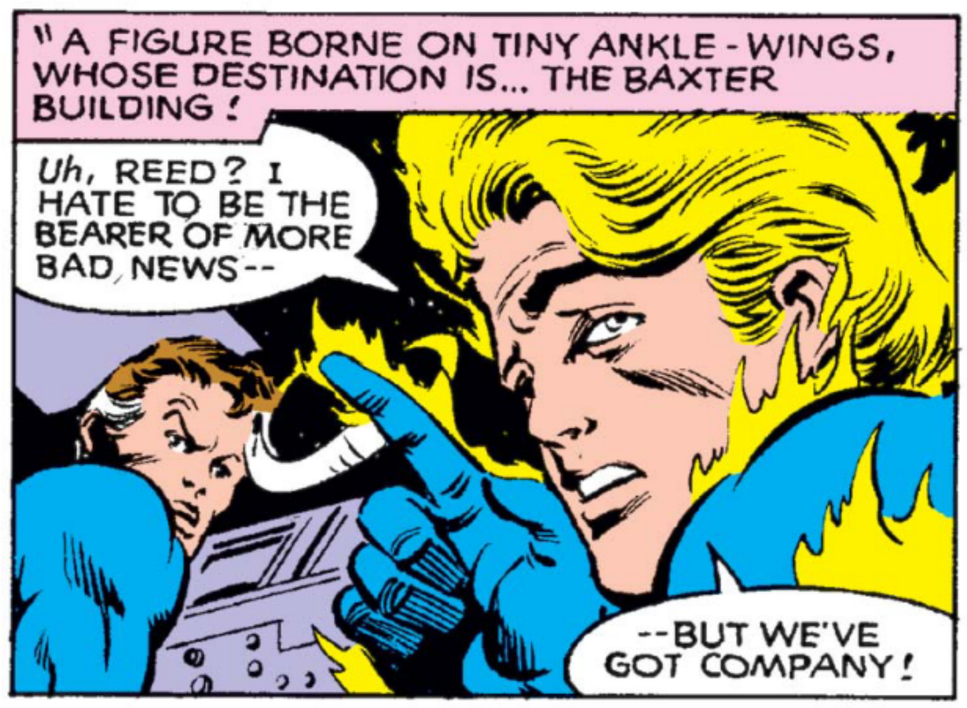
AN' I GOT ME A GOOD IDEA WHO!
KRUMPH

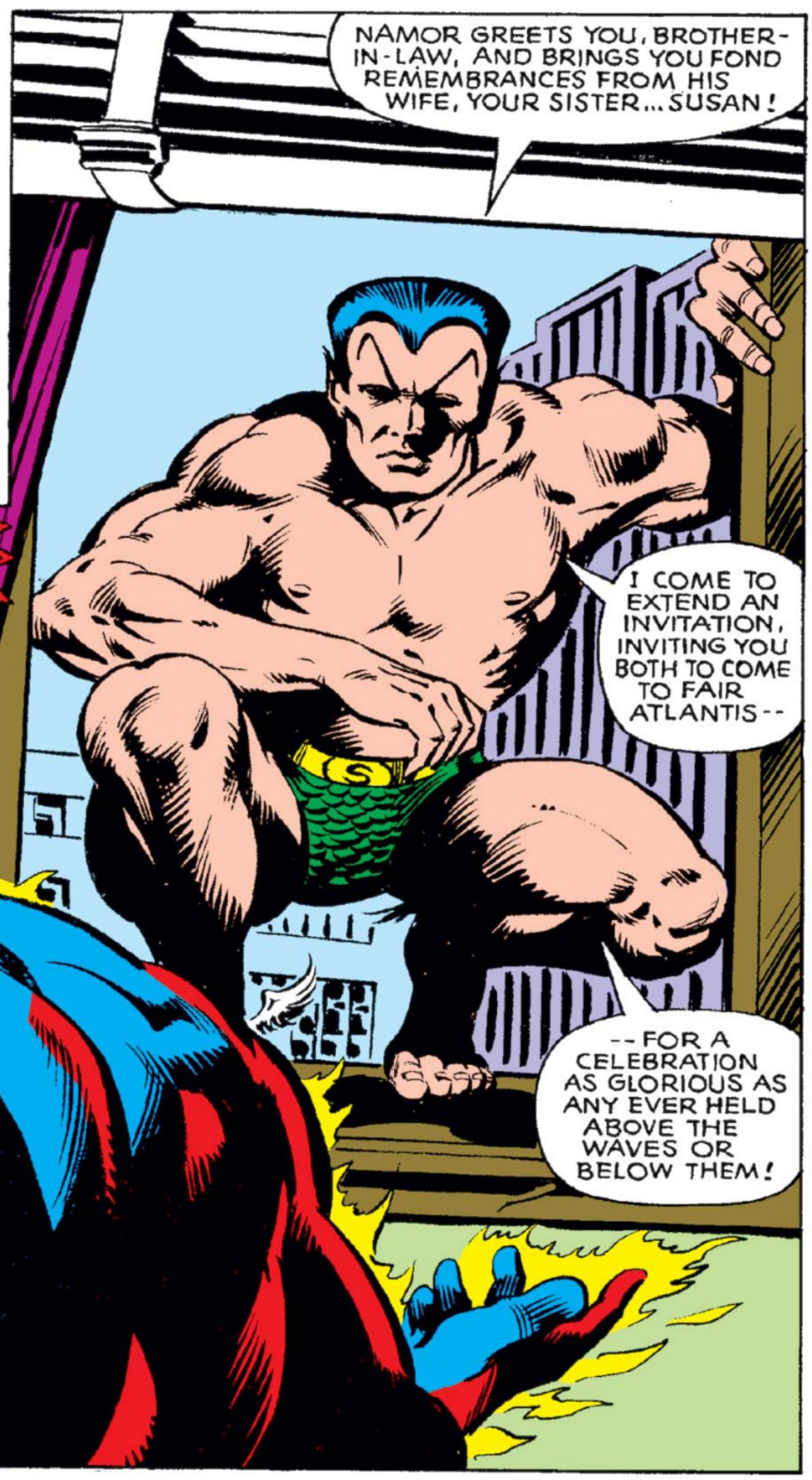

YOU FLAMIN' FIG-HEAD! IT WAS YOU, BLOWIN' HOT AIR THROUGH THE AIR-CONDITIONIN' VENT, WASN'T IT?
DAILY BUGLE
SPIDER-MAN QUITS FANTASTIC FOUR
WILL HE BE REPLACED?
SPIDER-MAN
DIDJA FIGURE THAT OUT ALL BY YOURSELF, GRUESOME? OR DID SOMEONE HELP YOU?
WHY, YOU--! AW, NUTS! A PUNK LIKE YOU AIN'T WORTH WASTIN' MY ANGER ON!
FORGET IT, FROG-FACE! IT WAS A JOKE, Y'KNOW?
J-O-K-E?
RATS! I TRIED TO PUT A LITTLE LIFE INTO THIS MORGUE, BUT WHAT'S THE USE! IT'S ALL NAMOR'S FAULT, FOR STEALING SUE!
HEY! MAYBE NAMOR HYPNOTIZED SUE INTO MARRYING HIM?!
THAT'S NUTS! SUZY KNEW WHAT SHE WAS DOIN'!
AN' REED'S GOT NO RIGHT TO COMPLAIN IF HE WAS TOO PANTYWAISTED TO FIGHT FOR HIS WOMAN! HEY--!
DON'T YOU EVER DARE SAY THAT AGAIN, BEN! NOT EVER!
YOU SHOULDN'TA DONE THAT, STRETCH, 'CAUSE IT WAS ALL I WUZ WAITIN' FOR!
YOU BEEN CRYIN' IN YER BEER FOR MONTHS, TAKIN' YER GRIEF OVER LOSIN' SUZY OUT ON EVERYBODY!
BUT ME, I AIN'T NO PUNCHIN' BAG!
YA HIT THE THING, FELLA--
RRIPPP
-- AN' THERE'S NO TELLIN' WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN TO YA!

THE FF'S ALL YOURS, STRETCH! I QUIT!
YOU WANT ME TO STOP HIM, REED?
NO, JOHNNY! LET HIM GO!


SO THAT'S IT! THE MIGHTY FF, KAPUT -- NOT WITH A BANG, BUT A WHIMPER!
SUDDENLY I CAN BREATHE EASY AGAIN, FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MONTHS!

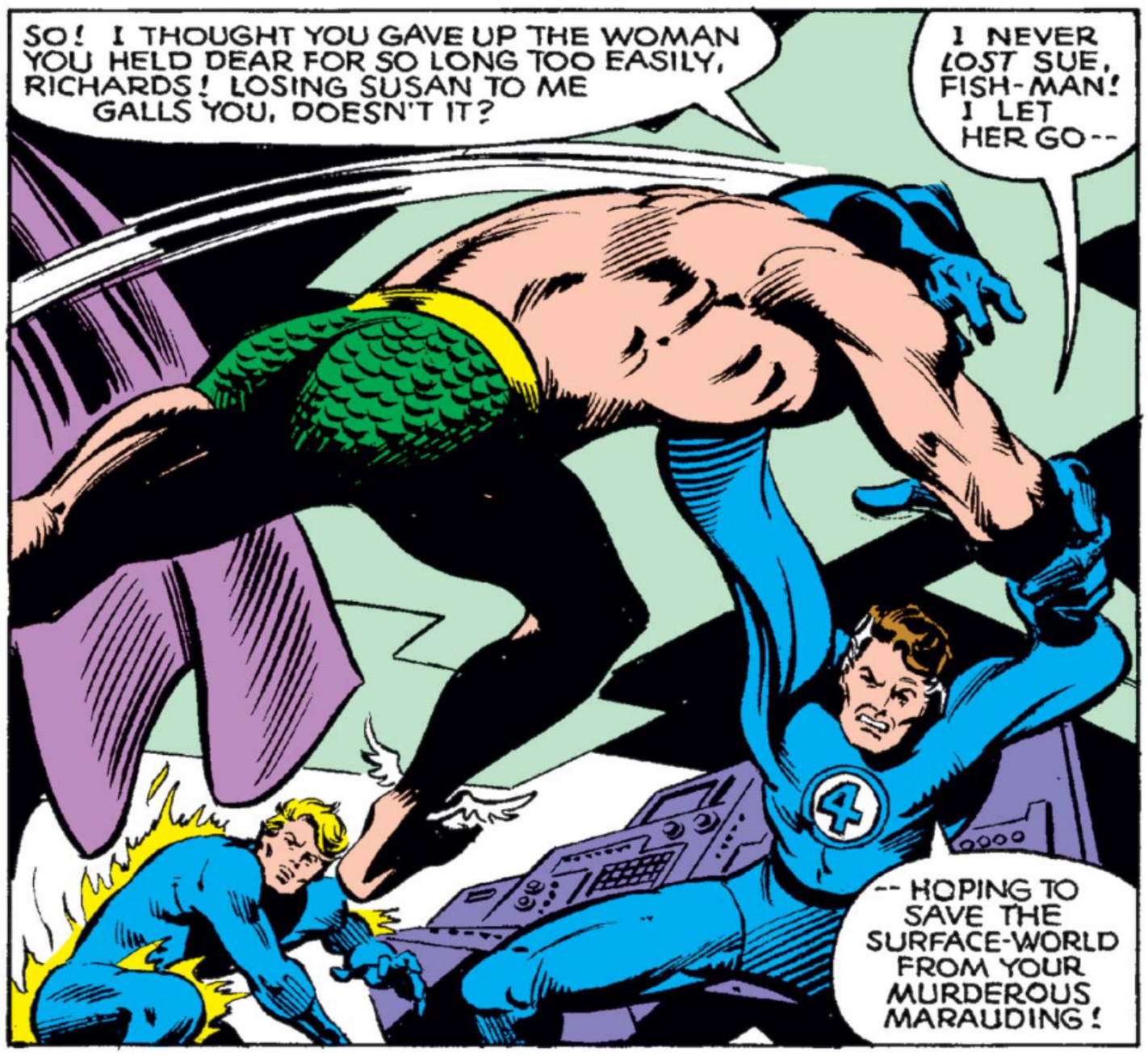
NOW MAYBE ALICIA AN' ME CAN FINALLY GET HITCHED!
TAXI
" BUT, AS BENJAMIN GRIMM DEPARTS, HE FAILS TO NOTICE A FLYING FIGURE HIGH ABOVE HIM.

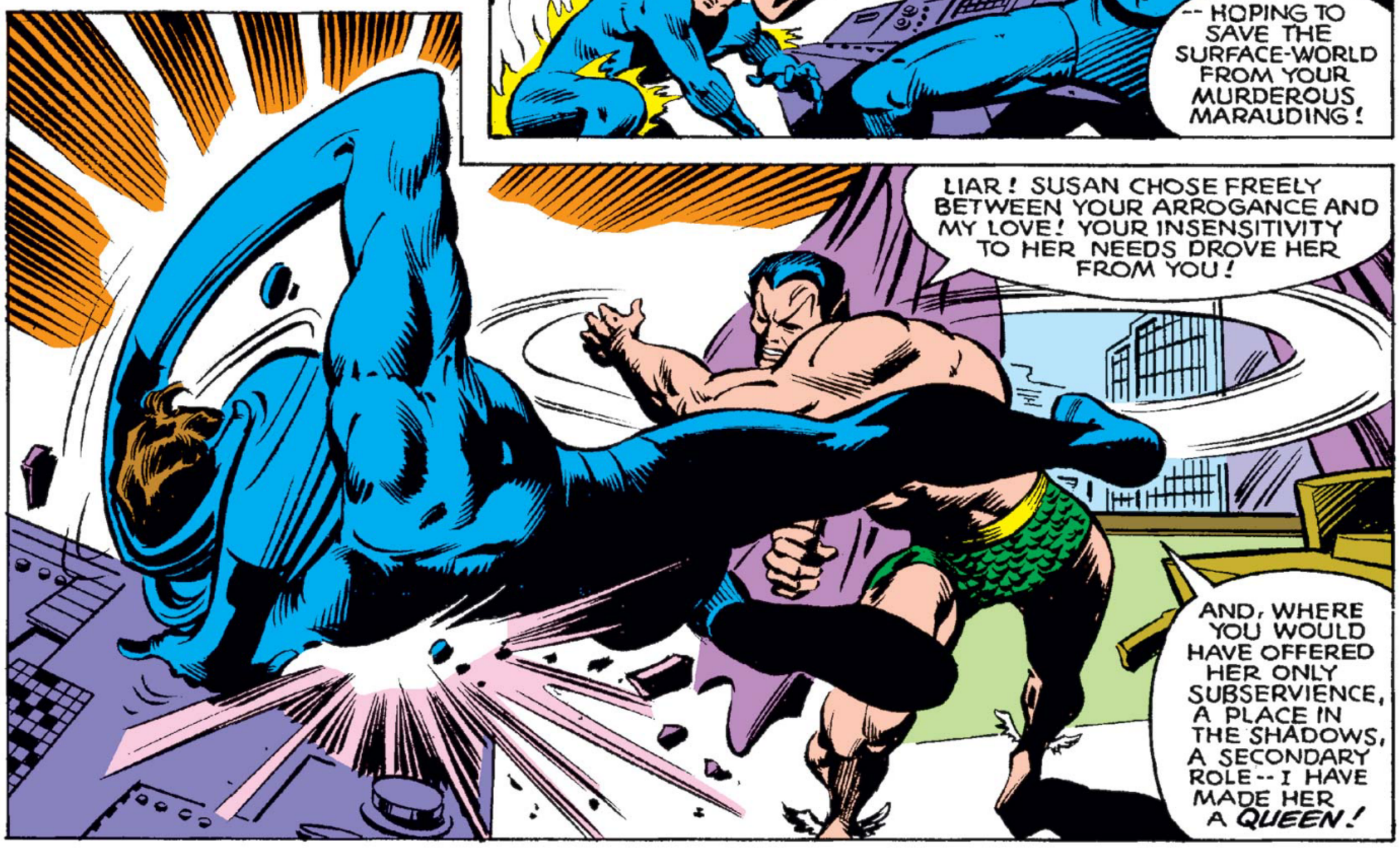

" A FIGURE BORNE ON TINY ANKLE-WINGS, WHOSE DESTINATION IS... THE BAXTER BUILDING!
Uh, REED? I HATE TO BE THE BEARER OF MORE BAD NEWS--
--BUT WE'VE GOT COMPANY!

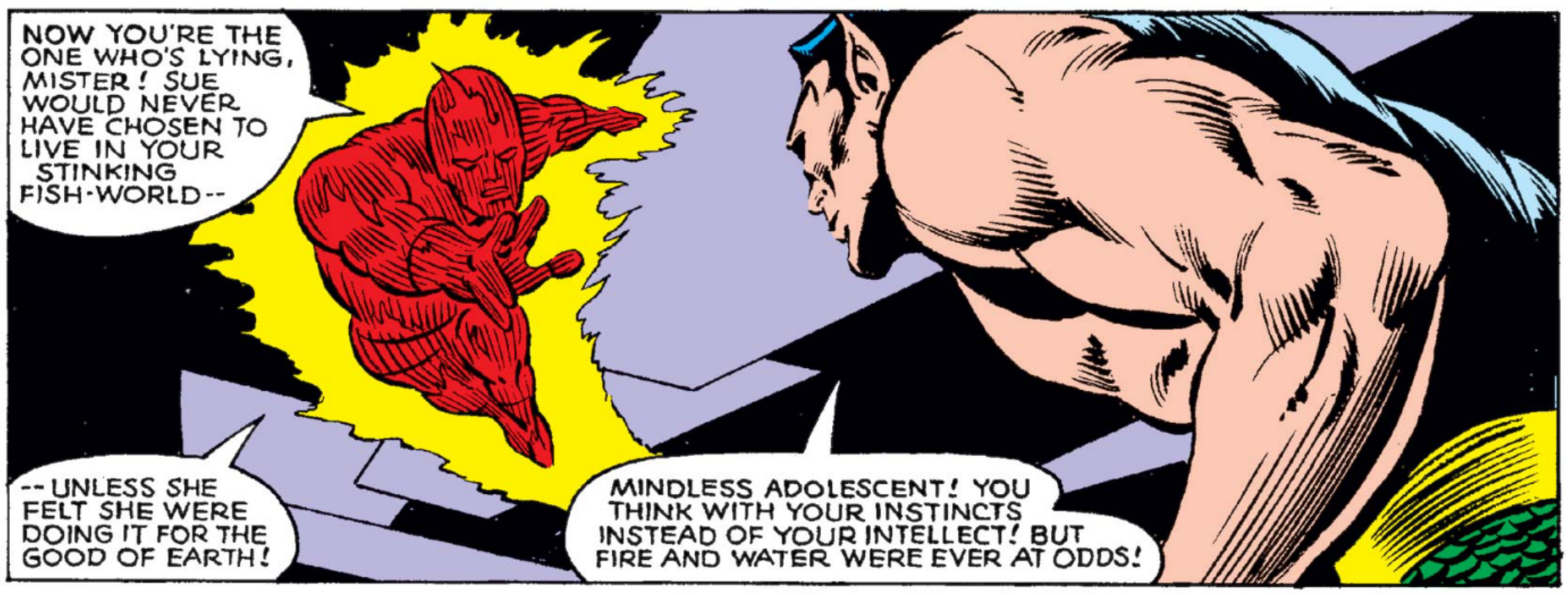

NAMOR GREETS YOU, BROTHER-IN-LAW, AND BRINGS YOU FOND REMEMBRANCES FROM HIS WIFE, YOUR SISTER... SUSAN!
I COME TO EXTEND AN INVITATION, INVITING YOU BOTH TO COME TO FAIR ATLANTIS--
--FOR A CELEBRATION AS GLORIOUS AS ANY EVER HELD ABOVE THE WAVES OR BELOW THEM!

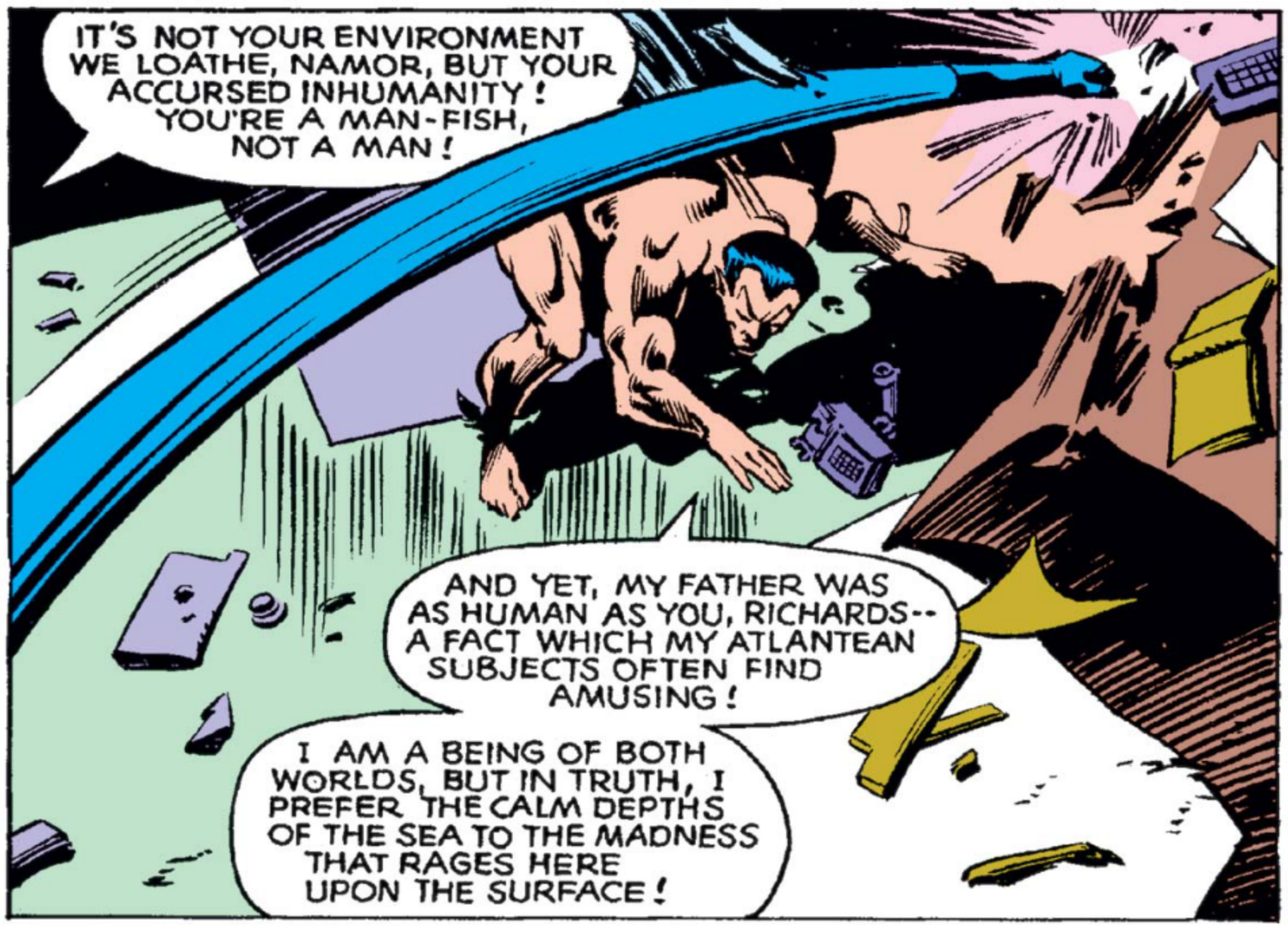
THE SUB-MARINER!

YOU MOCKING, SEA-SPAWNED SCUM! COMING FROM YOUR MISBEGOTTEN LIPS, EVEN SUE'S NAME SOUNDS OBSCENE!

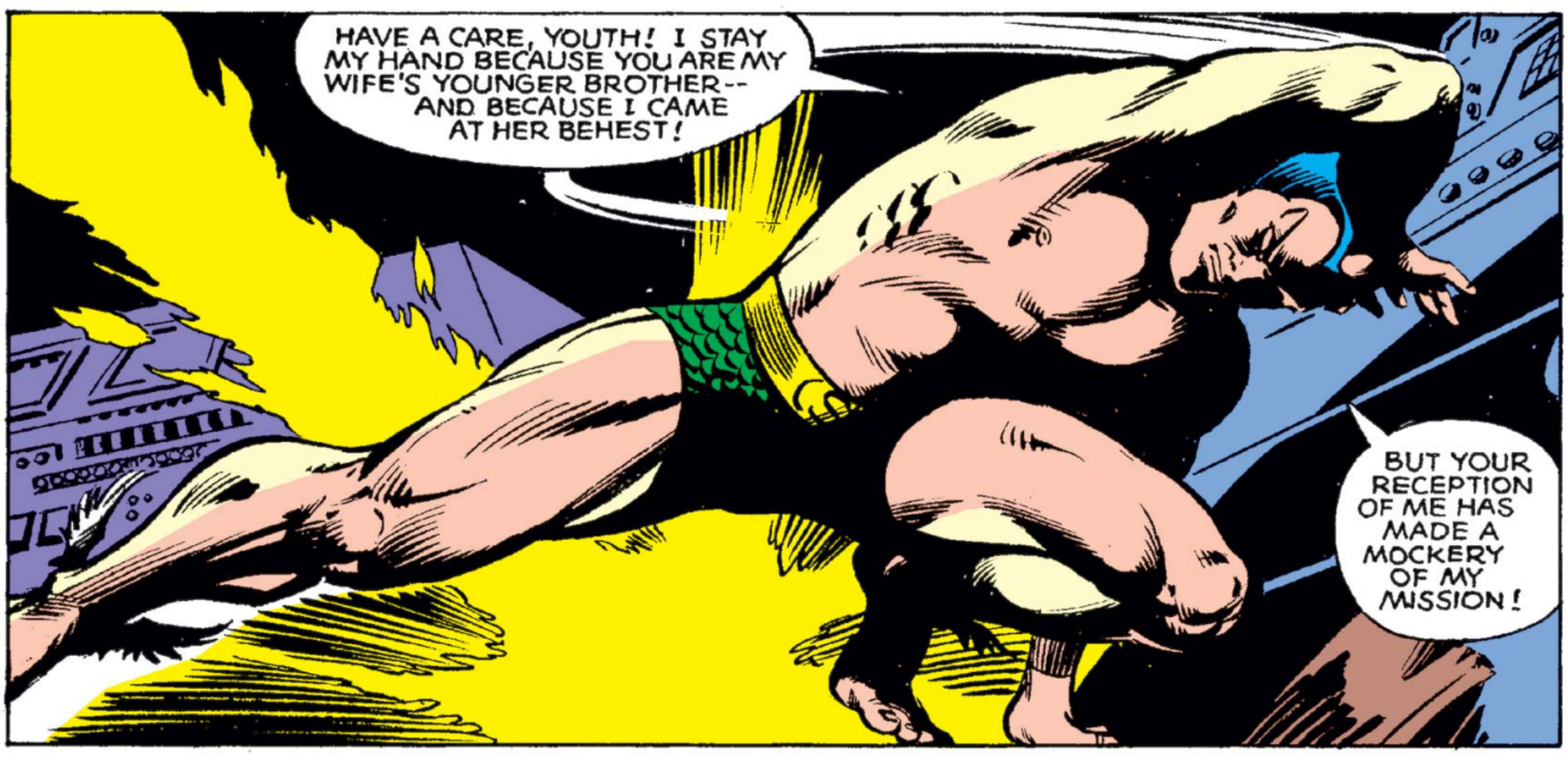

SO! I THOUGHT YOU GAVE UP THE WOMAN YOU HELD DEAR FOR SO LONG TOO EASILY, RICHARDS! LOSING SUSAN TO ME GALLS YOU, DOESN'T IT?
I NEVER LOST SUE, FISH-MAN! I LET HER GO--
-- HOPING TO SAVE THE SURFACE-WORLD FROM YOUR MURDEROUS MARAUDING!


LIAR! SUSAN CHOSE FREELY BETWEEN YOUR ARROGANCE AND MY LOVE! YOUR INSENSITIVITY TO HER NEEDS DROVE HER FROM YOU!
AND, WHERE YOU WOULD HAVE OFFERED HER ONLY SUBSERVIENCE, A PLACE IN THE SHADOWS, A SECONDARY ROLE -- I HAVE MADE HER A QUEEN!


NOW YOU'RE THE ONE WHO'S LYING, MISTER! SUE WOULD NEVER HAVE CHOSEN TO LIVE IN YOUR STINKING FISH-WORLD--
-- UNLESS SHE FELT SHE WERE DOING IT FOR THE GOOD OF EARTH!
MINDLESS ADOLESCENT! YOU THINK WITH YOUR INSTINCTS INSTEAD OF YOUR INTELLECT! BUT FIRE AND WATER WERE EVER AT ODDS!

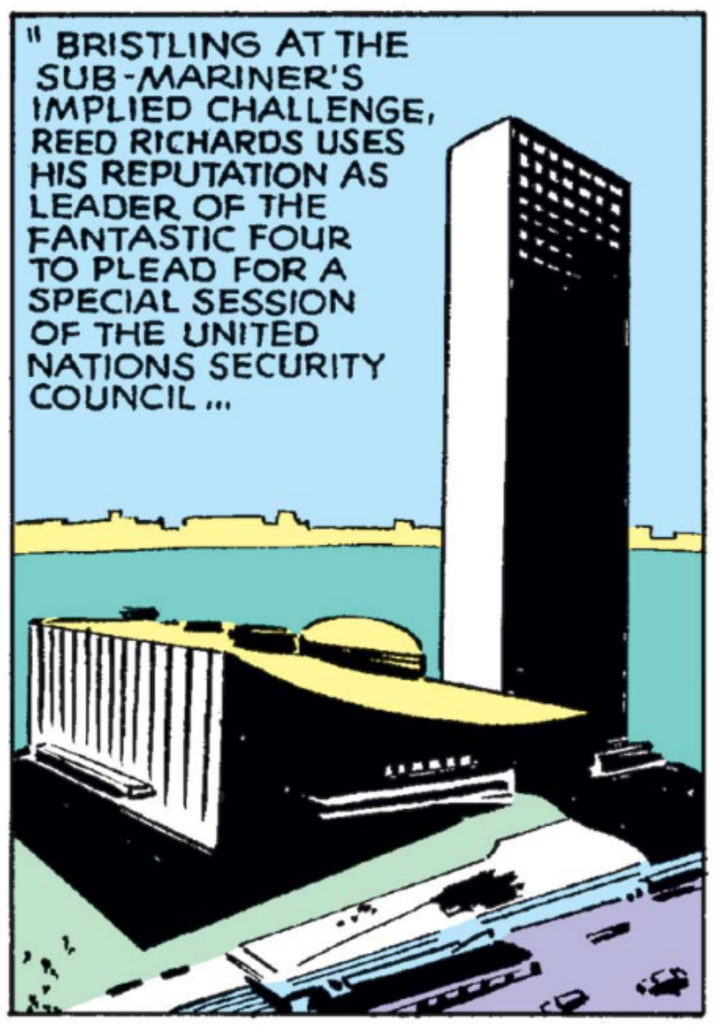

IT'S NOT YOUR ENVIRONMENT WE LOATHE, NAMOR, BUT YOUR ACCURSED INHUMANITY! YOU'RE A MAN-FISH, NOT A MAN!
AND YET, MY FATHER WAS AS HUMAN AS YOU, RICHARDS-- A FACT WHICH MY ATLANTEAN SUBJECTS OFTEN FIND AMUSING!
I AM A BEING OF BOTH WORLDS, BUT IN TRUTH, I PREFER THE CALM DEPTHS OF THE SEA TO THE MADNESS THAT RAGES HERE UPON THE SURFACE!

THEN WHY DON'T YOU GO BACK THERE TO STAY?!
THE FF WERE DOING FINE UNTIL YOU CAME INTO THE PICTURE!

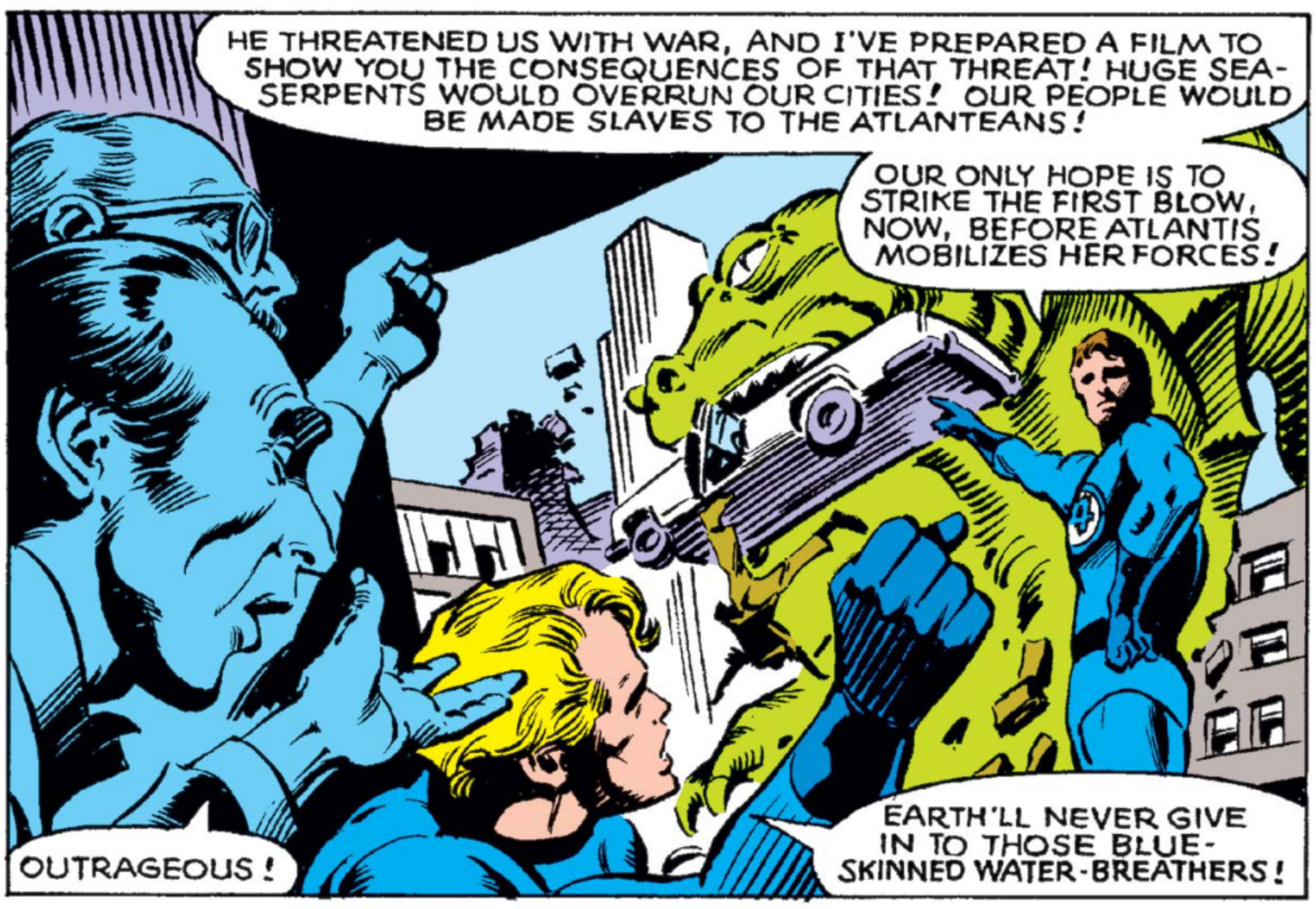

HAVE A CARE, YOUTH! I STAY MY HAND BECAUSE YOU ARE MY WIFE'S YOUNGER BROTHER-- AND BECAUSE I CAME AT HER BEHEST!
BUT YOUR RECEPTION OF ME HAS MADE A MOCKERY OF MY MISSION!

HEAR MY WORDS, RICHARDS-- THE WORDS OF NAMOR THE FIRST, KING OF ATLANTIS!

I CAME IN PEACE, AND IN PEACE DO I DEPART!
BUT THE HATRED YOU HARBOR IN THE RECESSES OF YOUR HEARTS FOR MY PEOPLE AND I WILL ONE DAY HEAD BOTH OUR WORLDS DOWN THE PATH TO DESTRUCTION! IF IT IS WAR YOU WANT, YOU WILL FIND ATLANTIS READY!


" BRISTLING AT THE SUB-MARINER'S IMPLIED CHALLENGE, REED RICHARDS USES HIS REPUTATION AS LEADER OF THE FANTASTIC FOUR TO PLEAD FOR A SPECIAL SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL ...

... THE PEOPLE OF ATLANTIS HARBOR HATRED IN OUR HEARTS! BEWARE! WE ARE READY FOR WAR!
THERE YOU HAVE IT, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, FROM THE SUB-MARINER'S OWN LIPS!

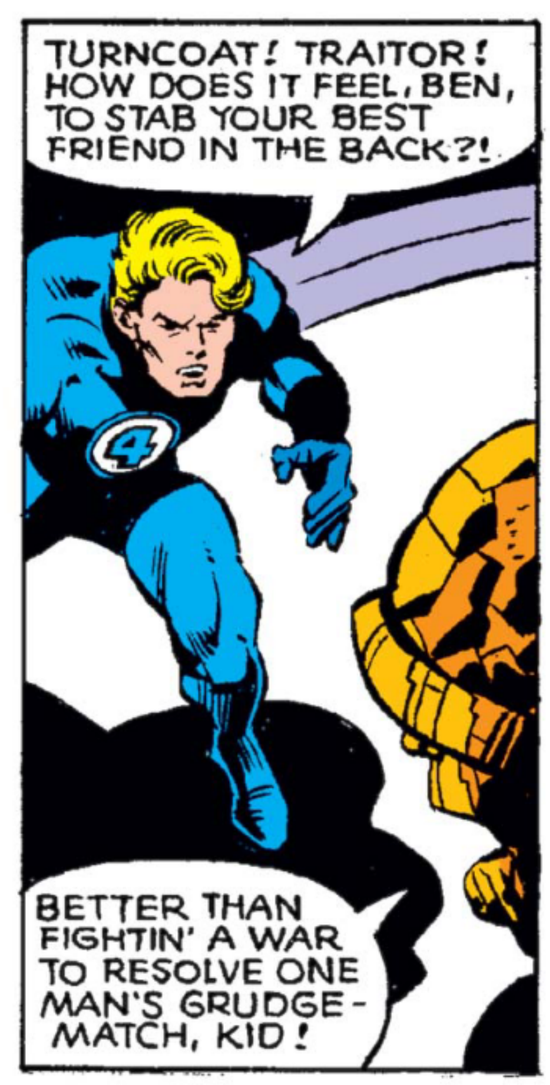

HE THREATENED US WITH WAR, AND I'VE PREPARED A FILM TO SHOW YOU THE CONSEQUENCES OF THAT THREAT! HUGE SEA-SERPENTS WOULD OVERRUN OUR CITIES! OUR PEOPLE WOULD BE MADE SLAVES TO THE ATLANTEANS!
OUR ONLY HOPE IS TO STRIKE THE FIRST BLOW, NOW, BEFORE ATLANTIS MOBILIZES HER FORCES!
OUTRAGEOUS!
EARTH'LL NEVER GIVE IN TO THOSE BLUE-SKINNED WATER-BREATHERS!

I HATE TO LET THE WIND OUTTA YER WAR-MONGERING SAILS, TORCH, BUT THE JIG'S UP!
THAT FILM WAS DOCTORED --
--AN' I GOT THE PROOF!

NAMOR NEVER THREATENED WAR! WATCH!
DR. RICHARDS, CAN YOU EXPLAIN THIS?
I ...!

"THE FILM PROVIDED BY BEN GRIMM REVEALS WHAT TRULY TRANSPIRED IN THE BAXTER BUILDING.
BEWARE! IF IT IS WAR YOU WANT YOU WILL FIND ATLANTIS READY!

DR. RICHARDS, I'M AFRAID I MUST ASK YOU TO... LEAVE.
I... UNDER-STAND, SIR!

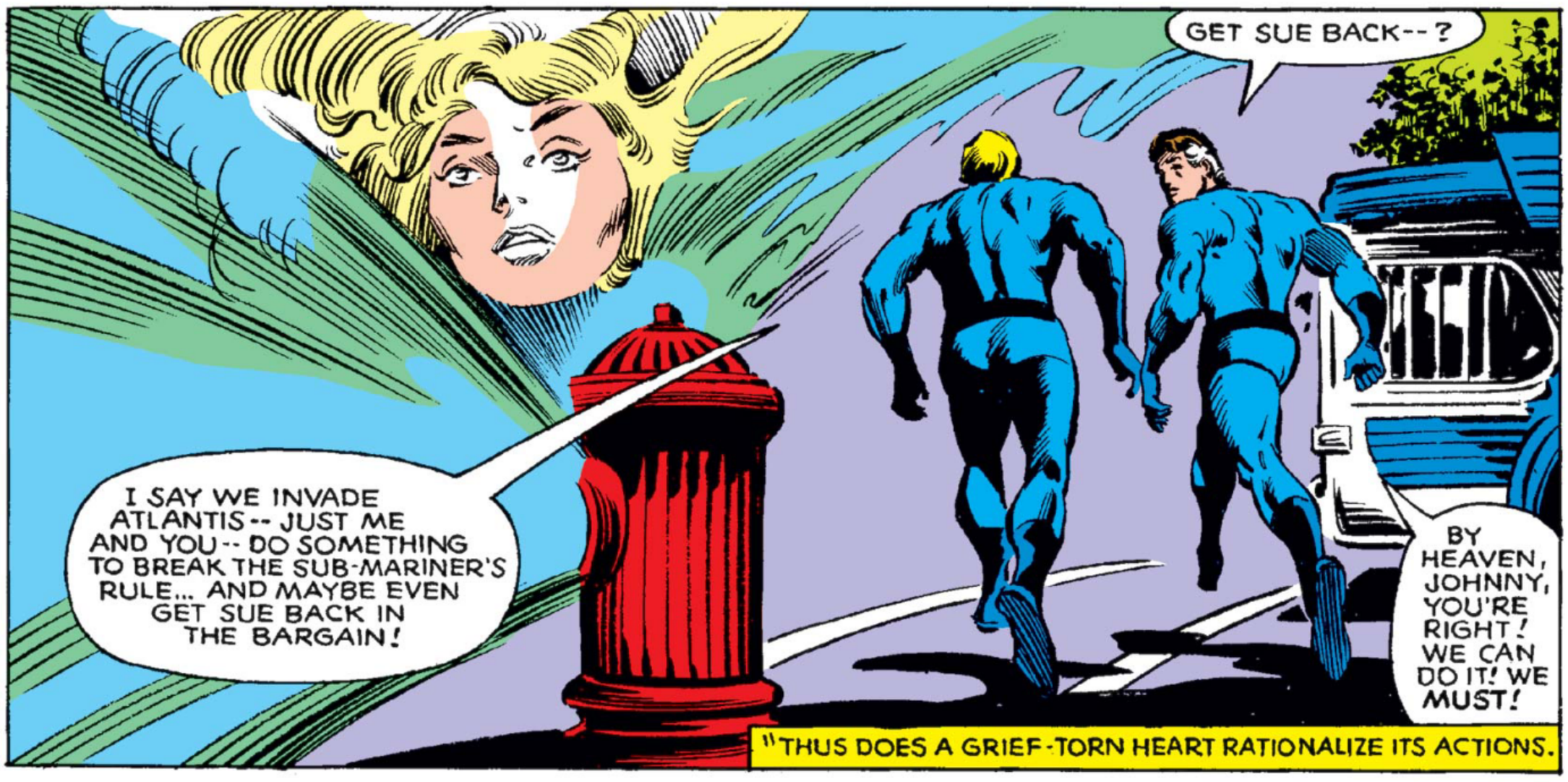

TURNCOAT! TRAITOR! HOW DOES IT FEEL, BEN, TO STAB YOUR BEST FRIEND IN THE BACK?!
BETTER THAN FIGHTIN' A WAR TO RESOLVE ONE MAN'S GRUDGE-MATCH, KID!

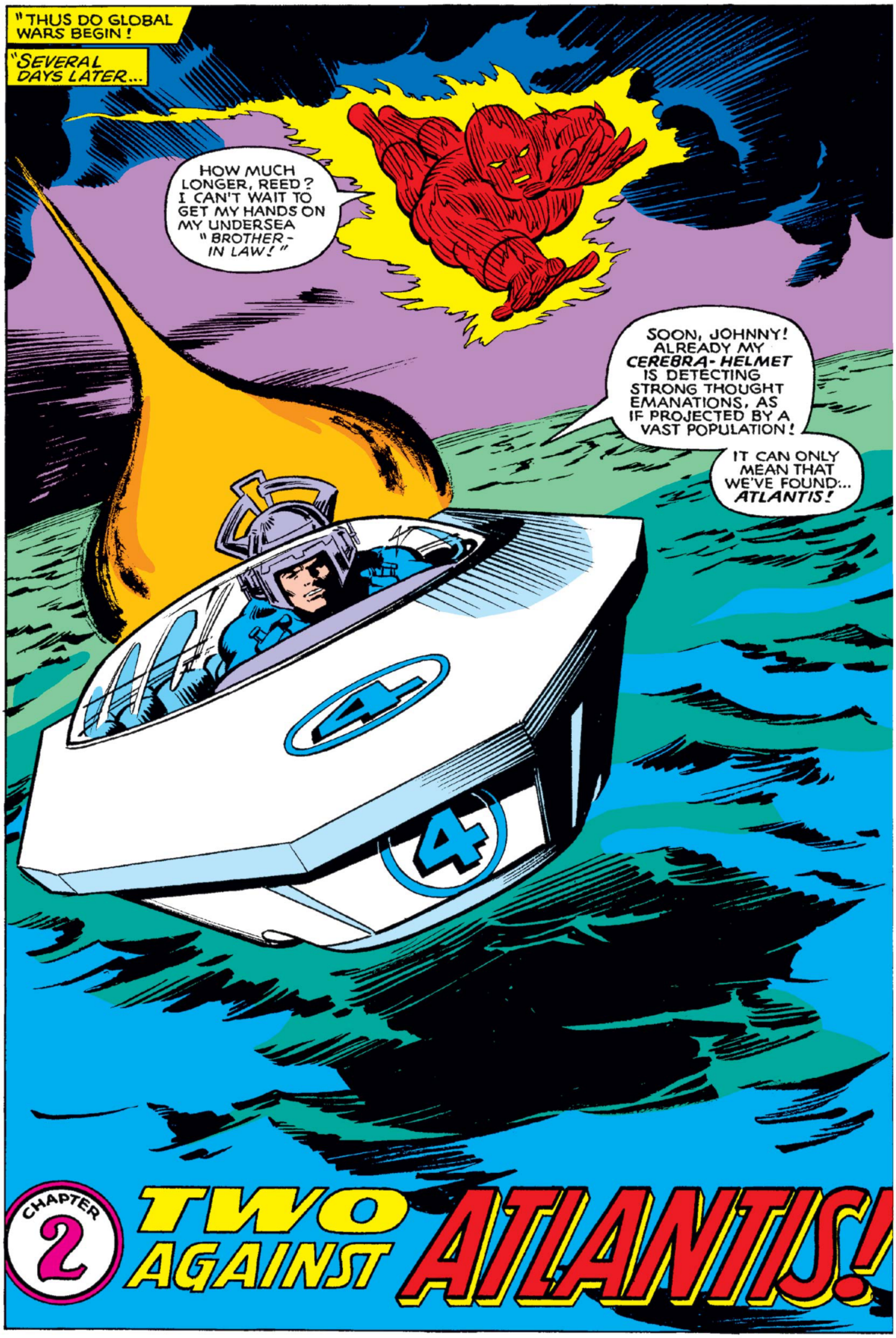
ON BEHALF OF THE ENTIRE HUMAN RACE, MR.GRIMM, I MUST THANK YOU FOR SAVING US FROM RUSHING INTO A SENSELESS WAR!
THANK ME, MR.SECRETARY GENERAL? FOR WHAT? FOR REDUCIN' MY BEST FRIEND, A JOE WHO'S SAVED THE WORLD TEN TIMES OVER, TO RIDICULE?
IT... HAD TO BE DONE, MR. GRIMM.
YEAH. THAT'S WHAT BRUTUS SAID TO CAESAR--JUST BEFORE HE PLUNGED IN THE KNIFE.

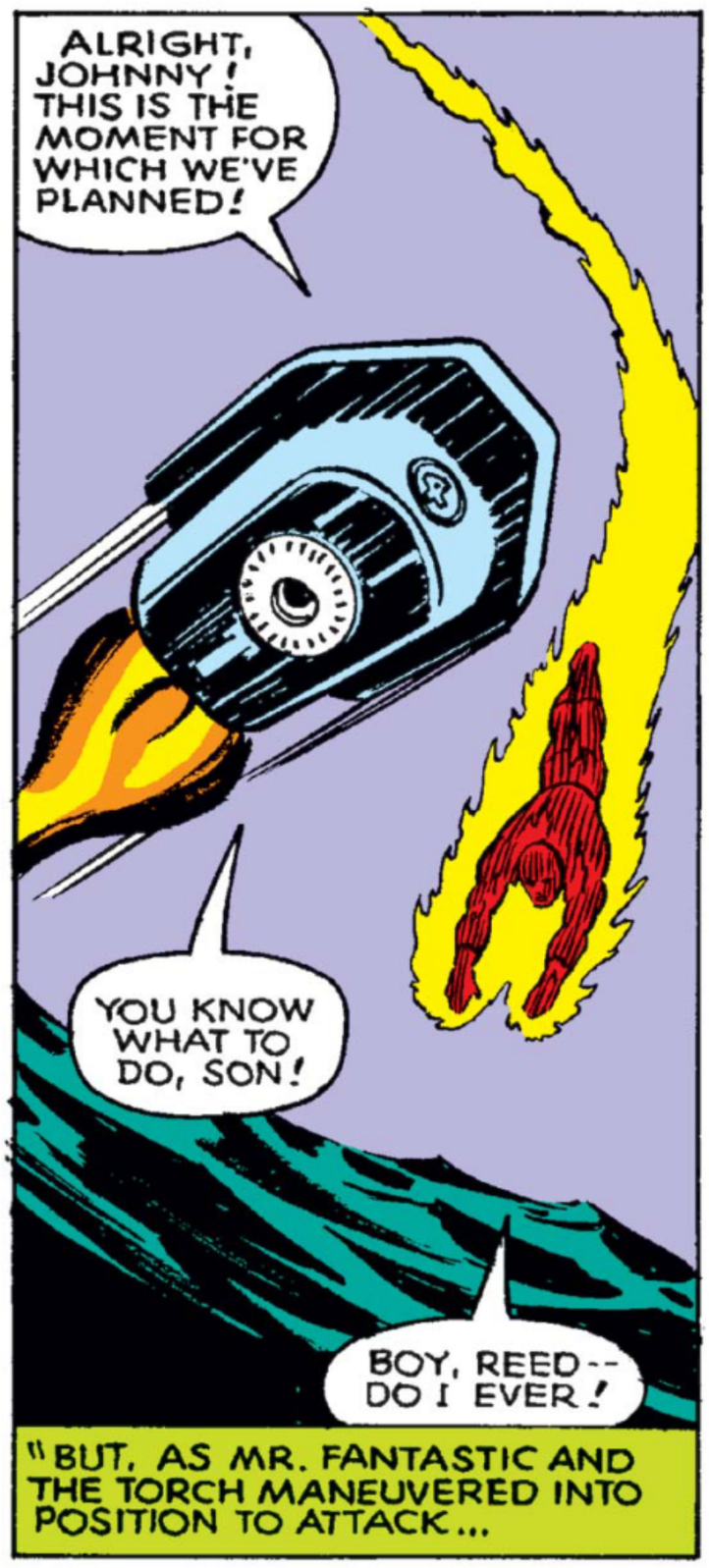
"OUTSIDE THE UNITED NATIONS...
FORGIVE ME, JOHNNY! I'VE MADE A LAUGHING-STOCK OF MYSELF, AND DRAGGED YOU DOWN WITH ME!
NO WAY, REED! I'M OLD ENOUGH TO KNOW WHAT I'M DOING!

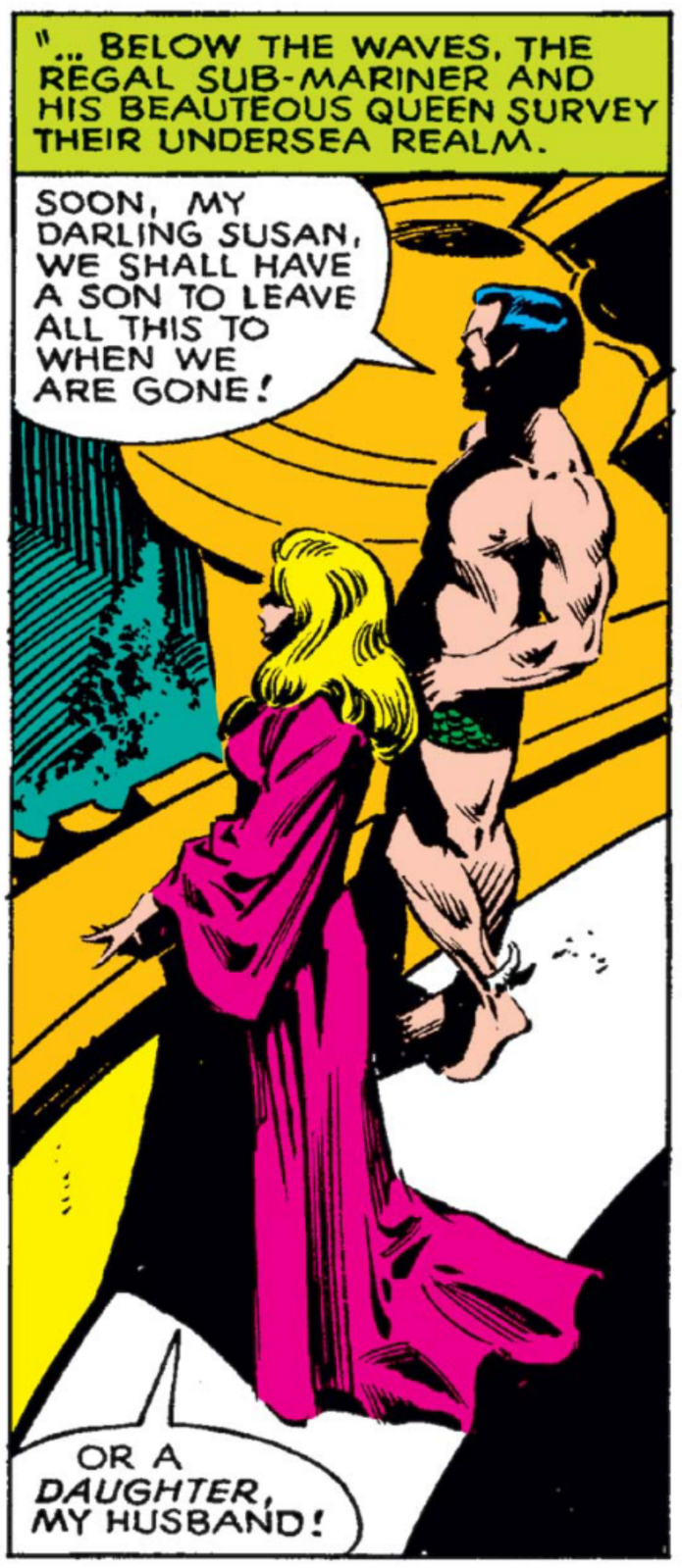
AND IT SEEMS TO ME THAT WE TWO ARE THE ONLY PEOPLE ON EARTH WHO REALLY UNDERSTAND THE THREAT TO HUMANITY POSED BY THE SUB-MARINER!
HECK, YOU MAY HAVE DOCTORED THAT FILM, BUT NAMOR HAS THREATENED THE SURFACE-WORLD BEFORE!

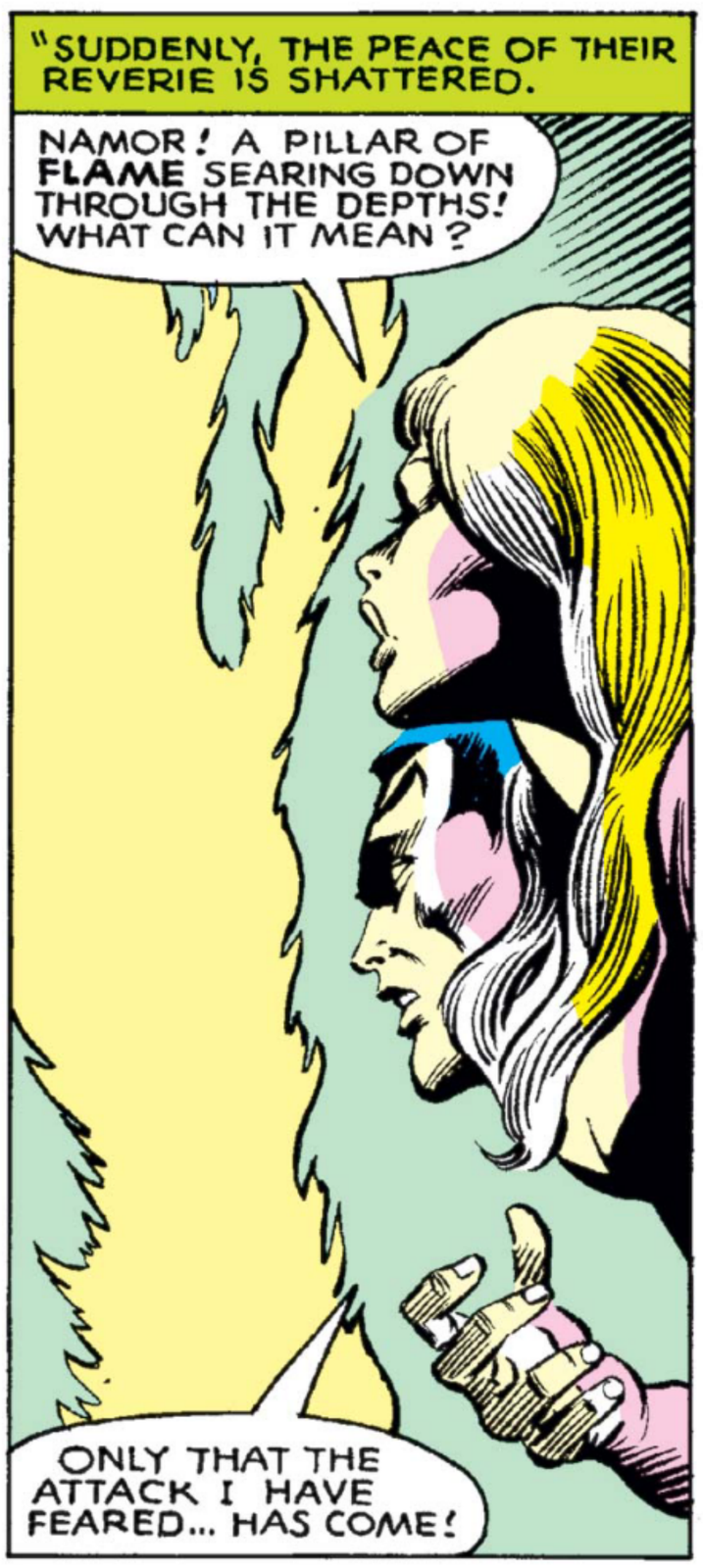
SOMEDAY SOON ATLANTIS'S DOMINATION OF THE SEAS IS GOING TO BECOME INTOLERABLE!
WE'VE GOTTA DO SOMETHING ABOUT THAT... NOW! WE'VE GOT POWER! YOU'RE THE GREATEST SCIENTIFIC GENIUS ALIVE!


GET SUE BACK--?
I SAY WE INVADE ATLANTIS-- JUST ME AND YOU-- DO SOMETHING TO BREAK THE SUB-MARINER'S RULE... AND MAYBE EVEN GET SUE BACK IN THE BARGAIN!
BY HEAVEN, JOHNNY, YOU'RE RIGHT! WE CAN DO IT! WE MUST!
"THUS DOES A GRIEF-TORN HEART RATIONALIZE ITS ACTIONS.

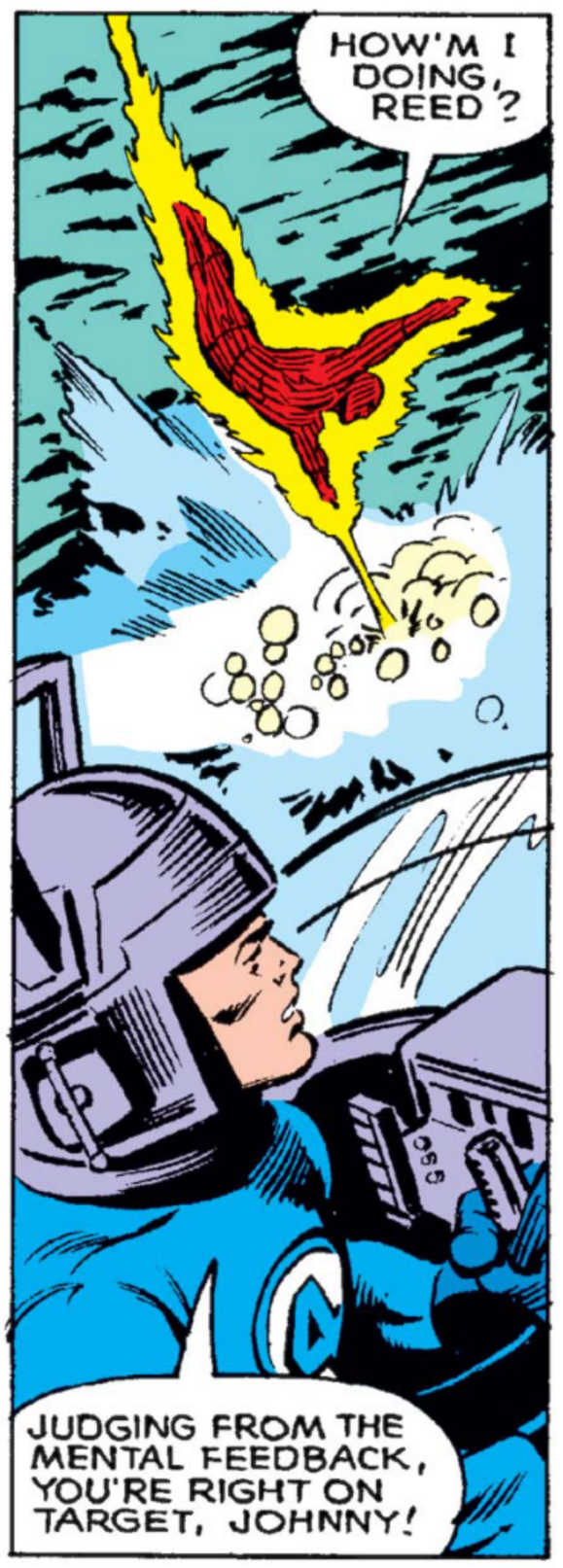

"THUS DO GLOBAL WARS BEGIN!
"SEVERAL DAYS LATER...
HOW MUCH LONGER, REED? I CAN'T WAIT TO GET MY HANDS ON MY UNDERSEA "BROTHER-IN LAW!"
SOON, JOHNNY! ALREADY MY CEREBRA-HELMET IS DETECTING STRONG THOUGHT EMANATIONS, AS IF PROJECTED BY A VAST POPULATION!
IT CAN ONLY MEAN THAT WE'VE FOUND... ATLANTIS!
CHAPTER 2
TWO AGAINST ATLANTIS!

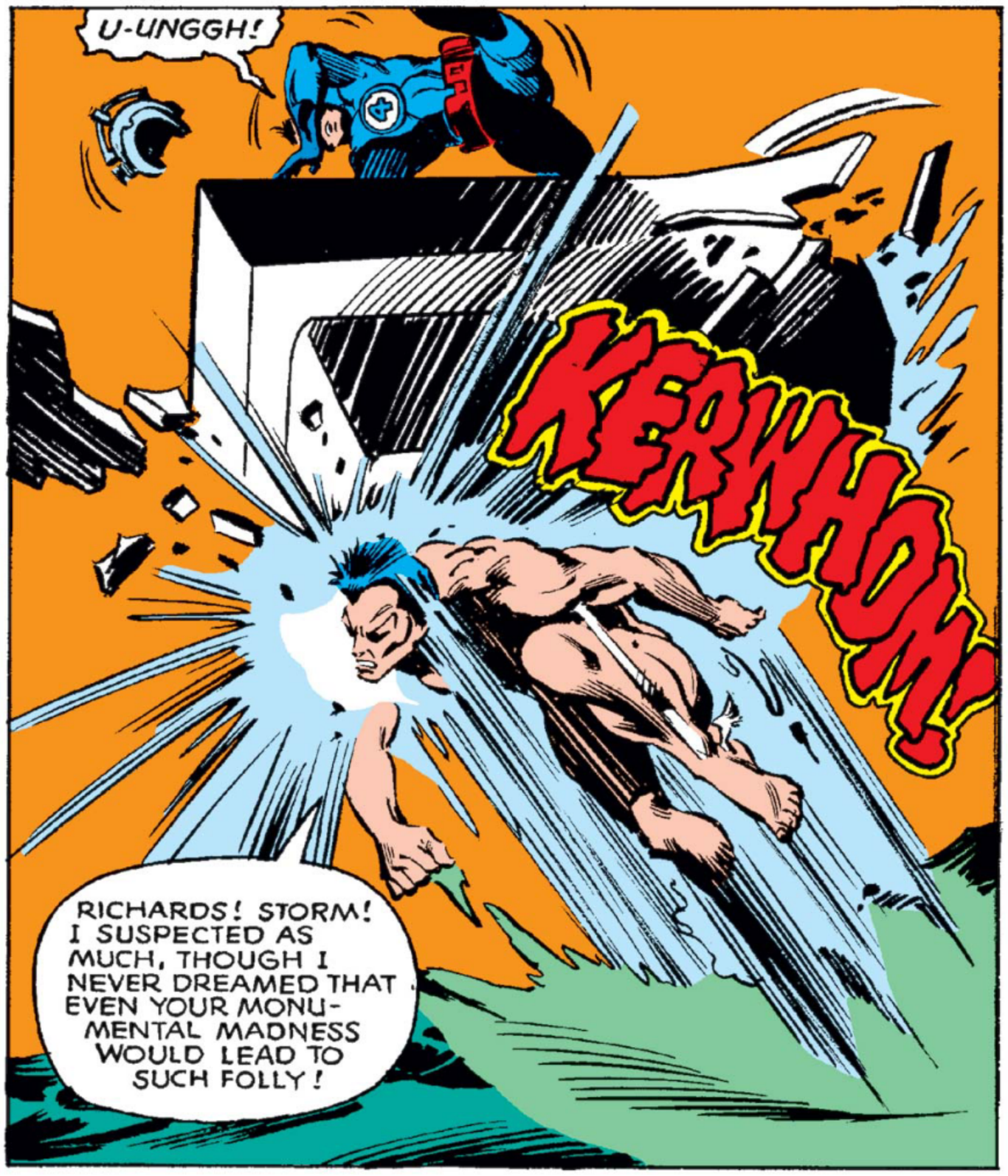

ALRIGHT, JOHNNY! THIS IS THE MOMENT FOR WHICH WE'VE PLANNED!
YOU KNOW WHAT TO DO, SON!
BOY, REED -- DO I EVER!
"BUT, AS MR. FANTASTIC AND THE TORCH MANEUVERED INTO POSITION TO ATTACK...

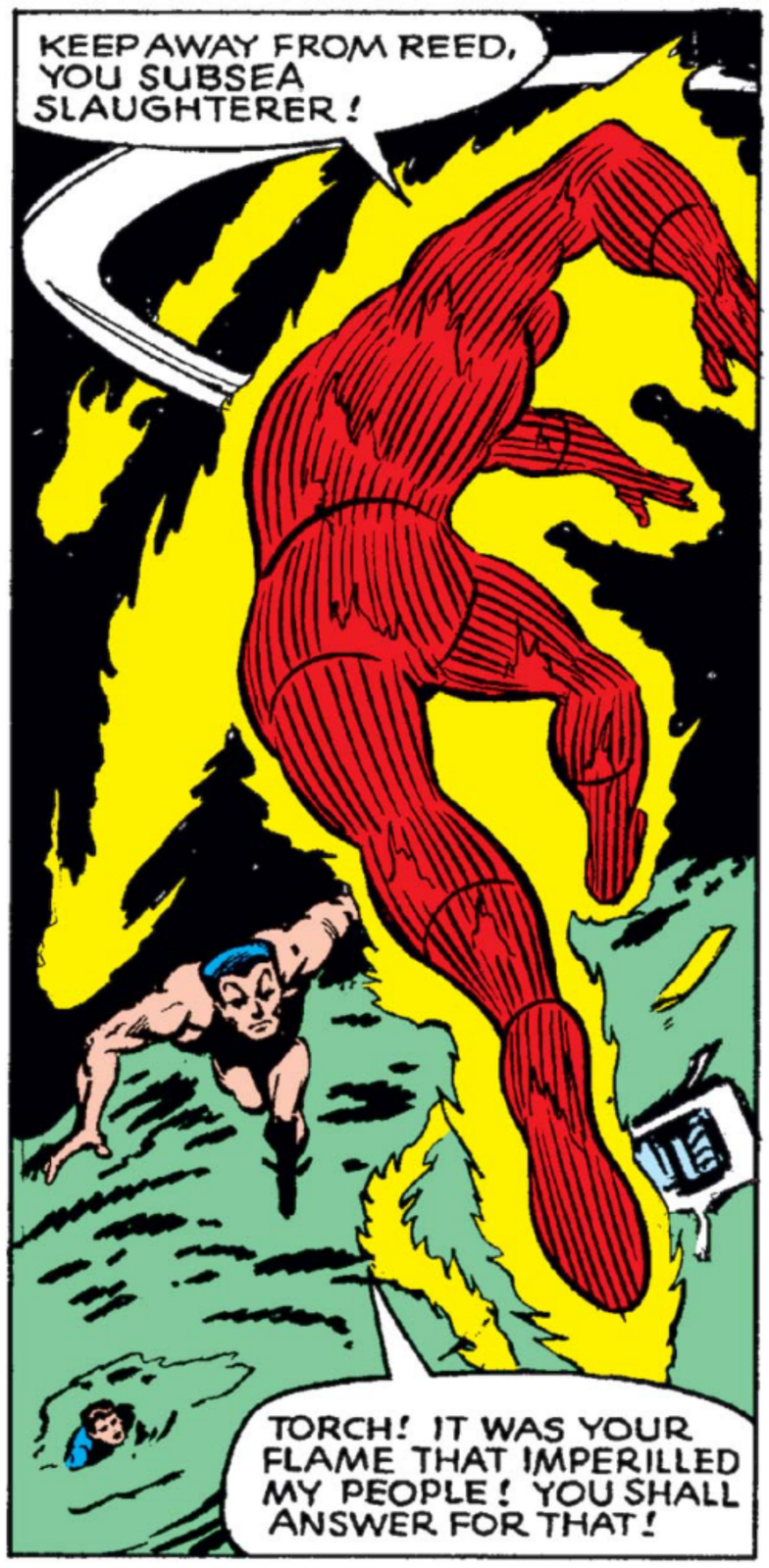

"... BELOW THE WAVES, THE REGAL SUB-MARINER AND HIS BEAUTEOUS QUEEN SURVEY THEIR UNDERSEA REALM.
SOON, MY DARLING SUSAN, WE SHALL HAVE A SON TO LEAVE ALL THIS TO WHEN WE ARE GONE!
OR A DAUGHTER, MY HUSBAND!

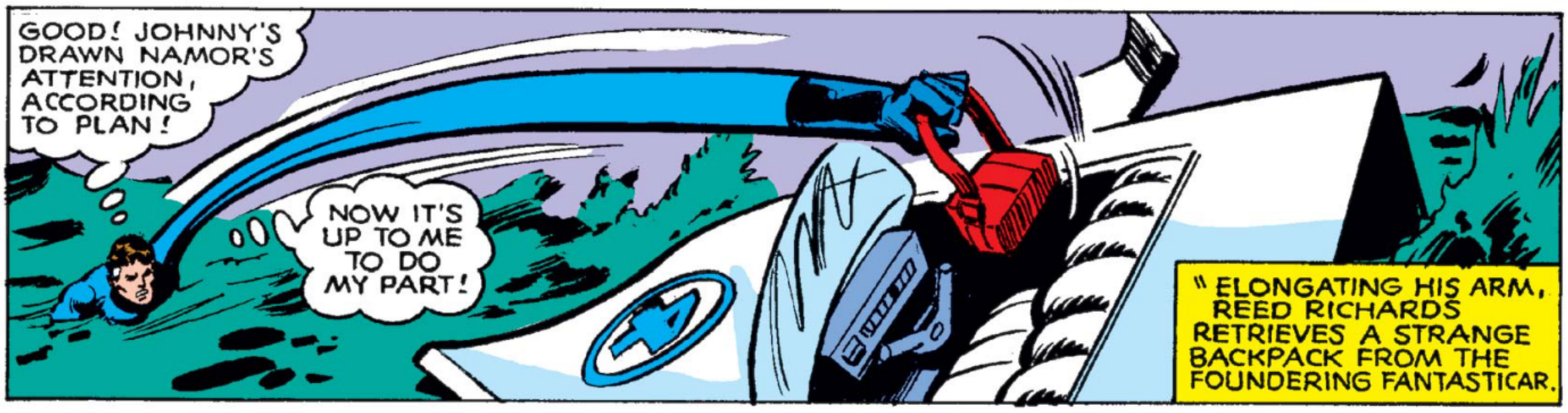

"SUDDENLY, THE PEACE OF THEIR REVERIE IS SHATTERED.
NAMOR! A PILLAR OF FLAME SEARING DOWN THROUGH THE DEPTHS! WHAT CAN IT MEAN?
ONLY THAT THE ATTACK I HAVE FEARED... HAS COME!

"FLAME-BURST FOLLOWS FLAME-BURST. THE WATER SEETHES AND BOILS. ANCIENT EDIFICES TOPPLE. ORNATE STATUARY BECOMES MELTED SLAG.
WHERE IS NAMOR? WHERE IS OUR KING? WHY DOES HE NOT SAVE US?!
SAVE US! SAVE US!


HOW'M I DOING, REED?
JUDGING FROM THE MENTAL FEEDBACK, YOU'RE RIGHT ON TARGET, JOHNNY!

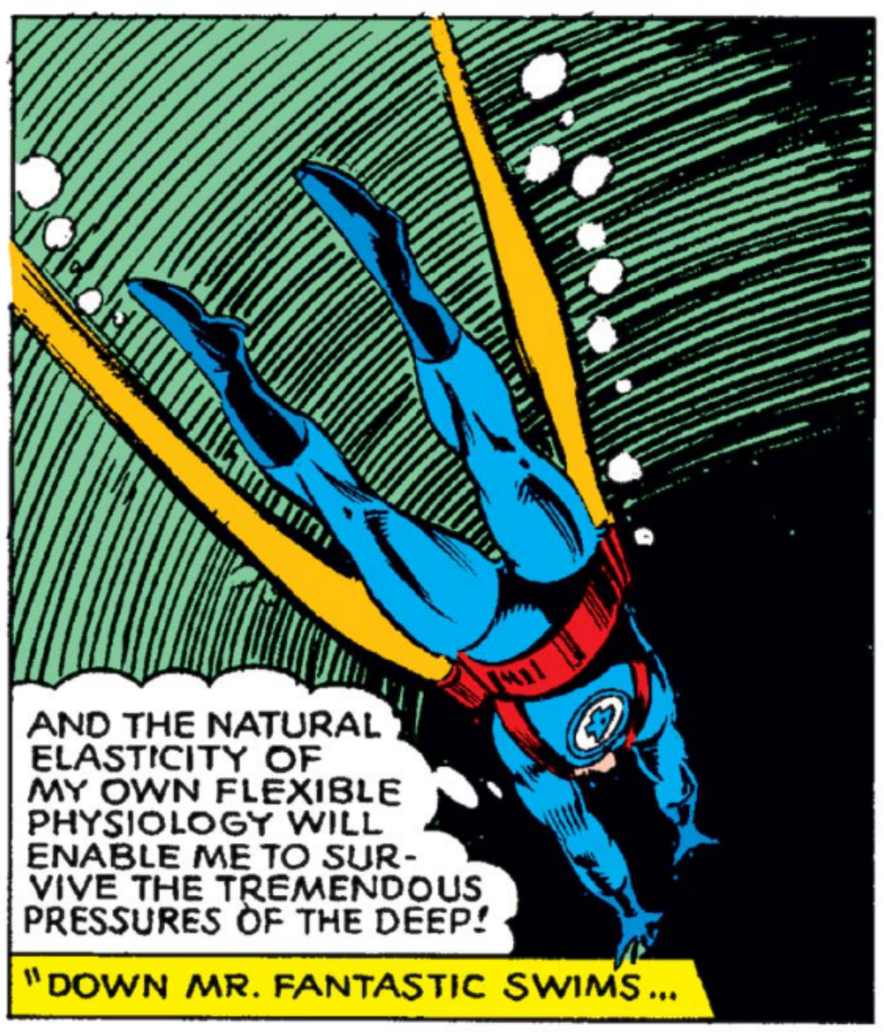

U-UNGGH!
KERWHOM!
RICHARDS! STORM! I SUSPECTED AS MUCH, THOUGH I NEVER DREAMED THAT EVEN YOUR MONU-MENTAL MADNESS WOULD LEAD TO SUCH FOLLY!

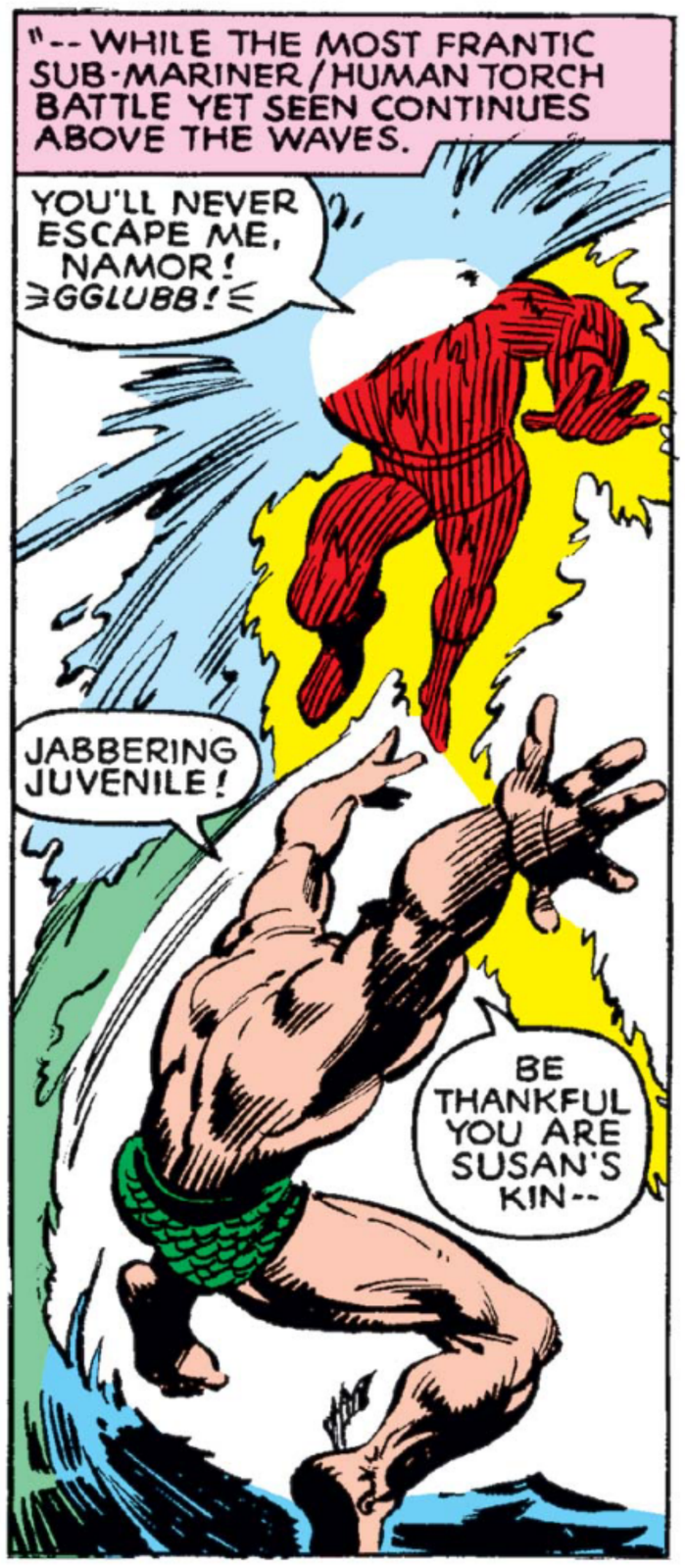

KEEP AWAY FROM REED, YOU SUBSEA SLAUGHTERER!
TORCH! IT WAS YOUR FLAME THAT IMPERILLED MY PEOPLE! YOU SHALL ANSWER FOR THAT!

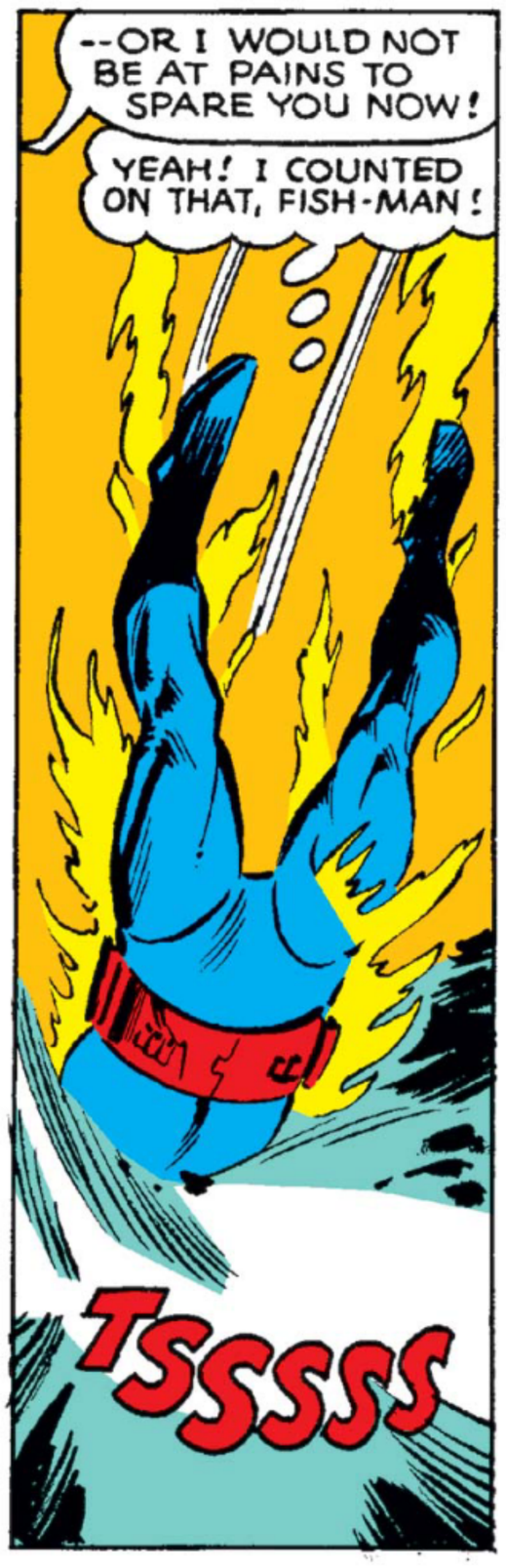

GOOD! JOHNNY'S DRAWN NAMOR'S ATTENTION, ACCORDING TO PLAN!
NOW IT'S UP TO ME TO DO MY PART!
" ELONGATING HIS ARM, REED RICHARDS RETRIEVES A STRANGE BACKPACK FROM THE FOUNDERING FANTASTICAR.

THE ULTRA-WEAPON IS INTACT! IT ONLY NEEDS TO BE DELIVERED TO ITS POINT OF DETONATION!

ATLANTIS!
THIS OXYTABLET WILL ENABLE ME TO BREATHE UNDERWATER FOR HOURS!

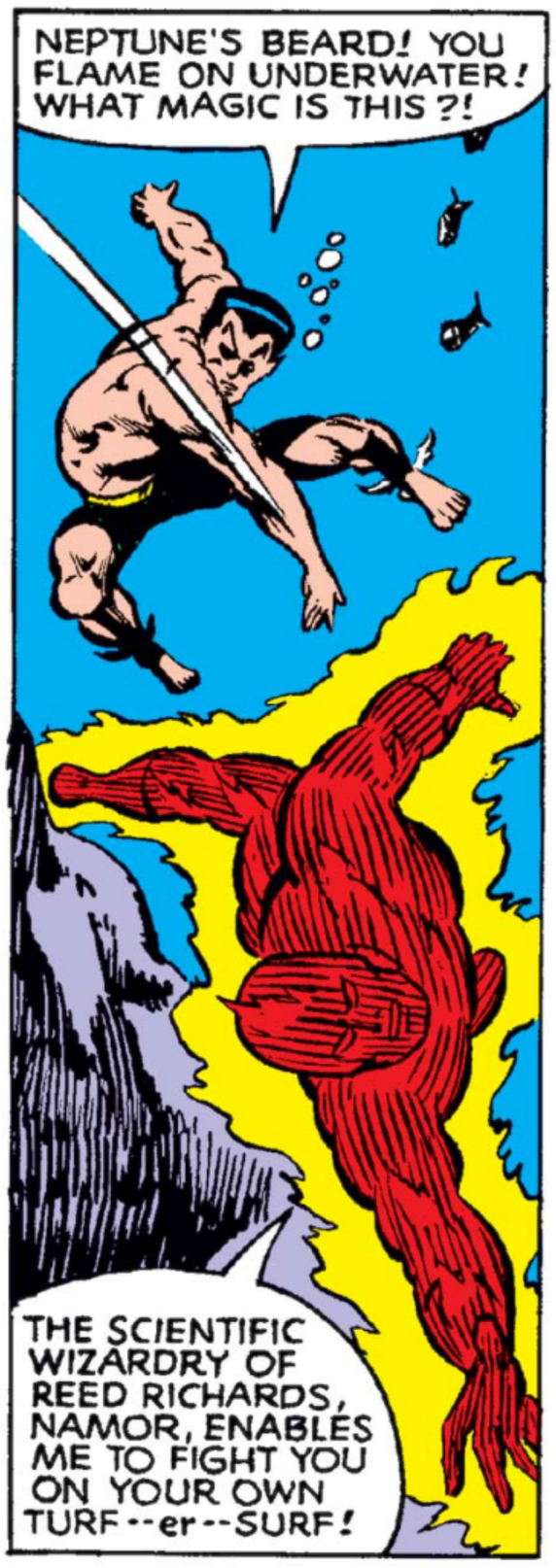

AND THE NATURAL ELASTICITY OF MY OWN FLEXIBLE PHYSIOLOGY WILL ENABLE ME TO SUR-VIVE THE TREMENDOUS PRESSURES OF THE DEEP!
" DOWN MR. FANTASTIC SWIMS...


"-- WHILE THE MOST FRANTIC SUB-MARINER/HUMAN TORCH BATTLE YET SEEN CONTINUES ABOVE THE WAVES.
YOU'LL NEVER ESCAPE ME, NAMOR! ≥GGLUBB!≤
JABBERING JUVENILE!
BE THANKFUL YOU ARE SUSAN'S KIN--

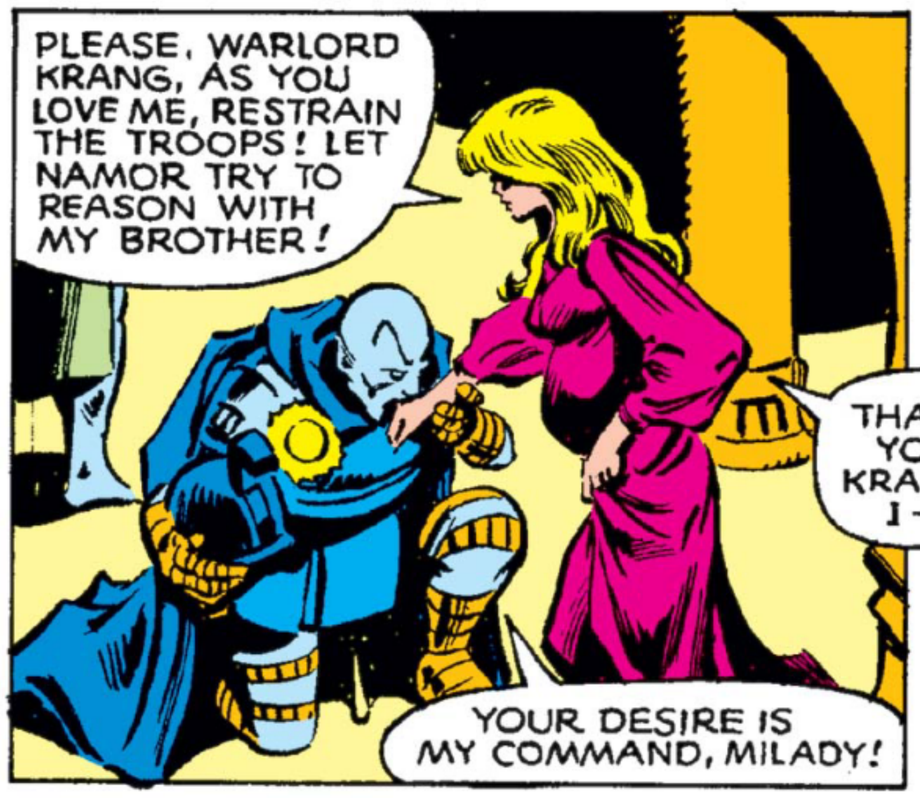

--OR I WOULD NOT BE AT PAINS TO SPARE YOU NOW!
YEAH! I COUNTED ON THAT, FISH-MAN!
TSSSSS

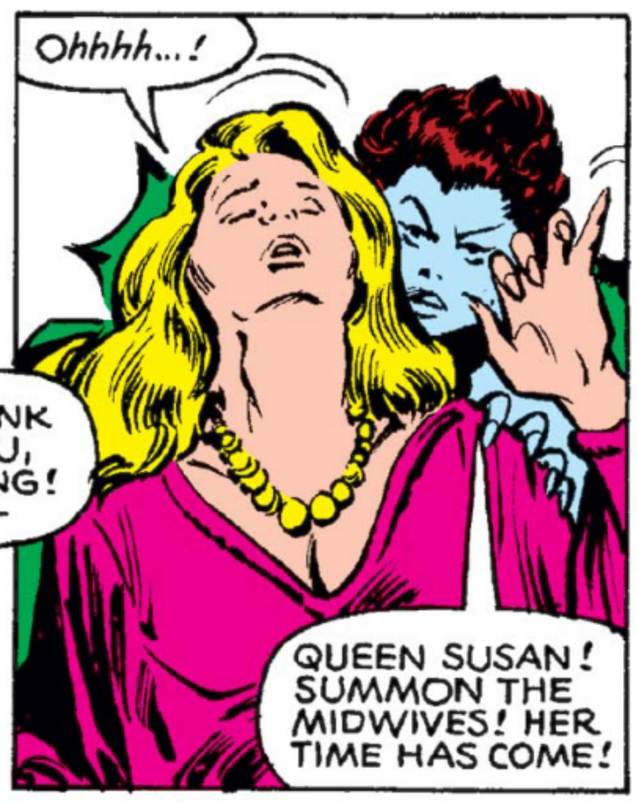
I HELD OUT LONG ENOUGH TO GIVE REED THE HEAD-START HE WANTED! BUT NOW I'VE GOT TO SWALLOW MY OXYTABLET --
--AND CARRY THE BATTLE BELOW THE WAVES!

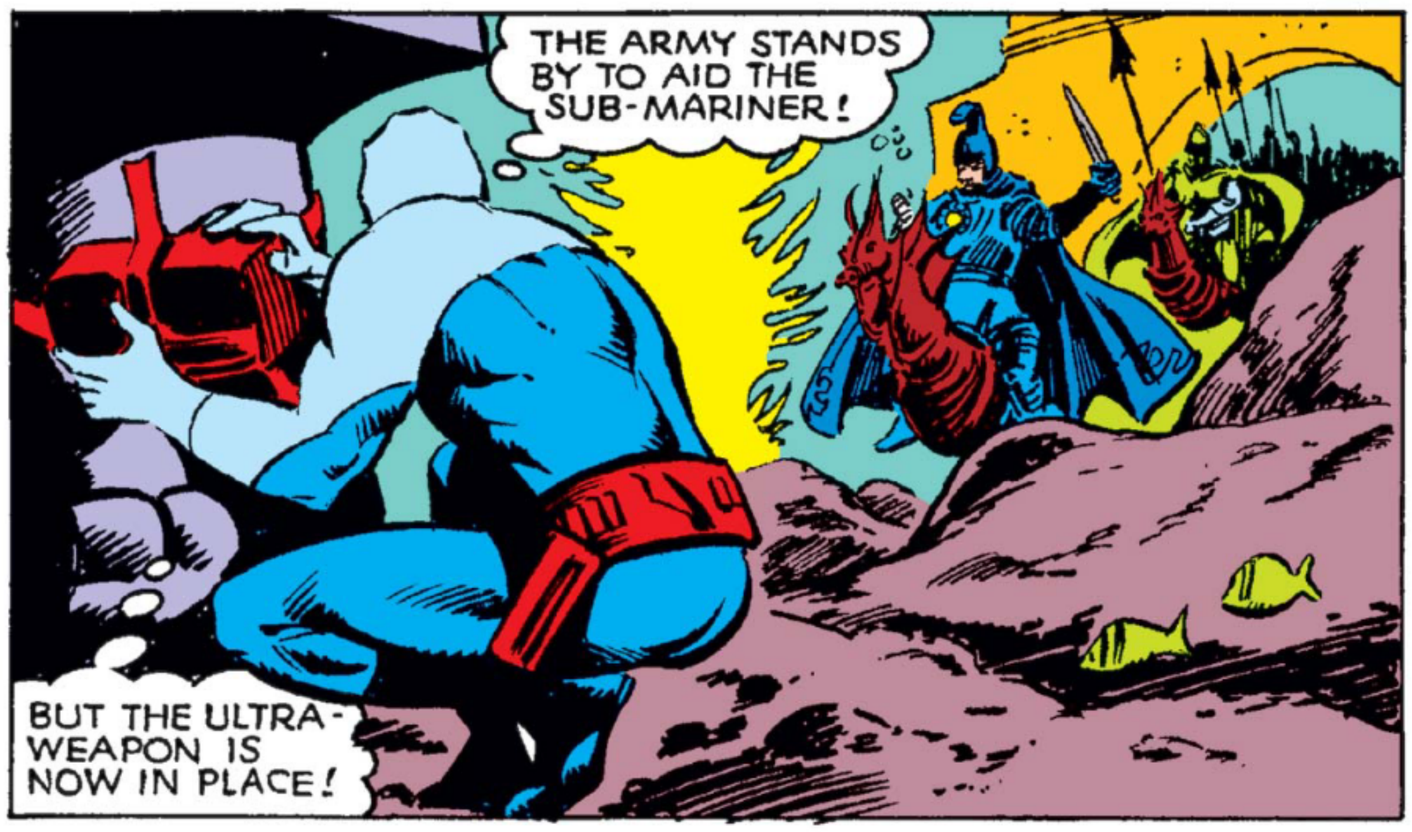
NOW TO GIVE POINTY-EARS THE SURPRISE OF HIS LIFE!


NEPTUNE'S BEARD! YOU FLAME ON UNDERWATER! WHAT MAGIC IS THIS?!
THE SCIENTIFIC WIZARDRY OF REED RICHARDS, NAMOR, ENABLES ME TO FIGHT YOU ON YOUR OWN TURF--er--SURF!

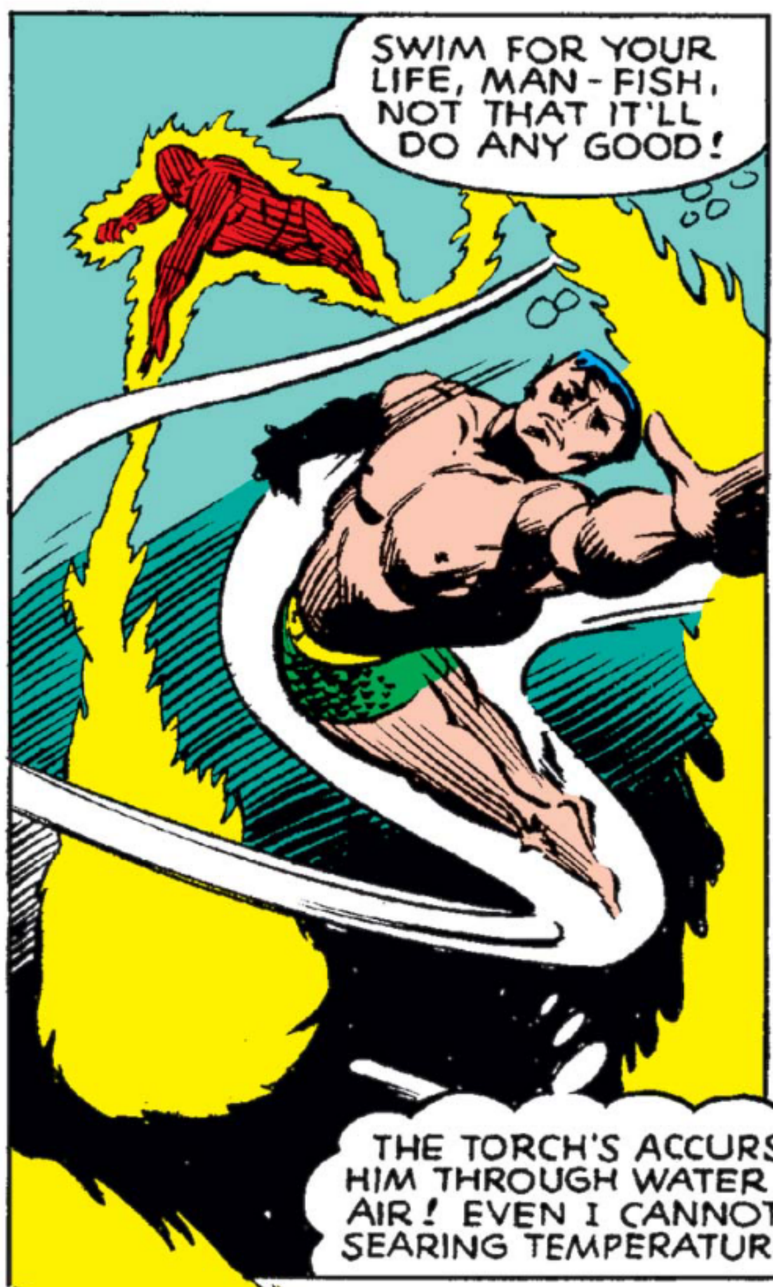
THIS BODES ILL FOR OUR KING!
IF THE SEA CANNOT DOUSE YOUR BROTHER'S FLAME, QUEEN SUSAN, I MUST ORDER THE ARMY TO AID KING NAMOR!
N-NO! YOU MUSTN'T HURT REED OR JOHNNY!

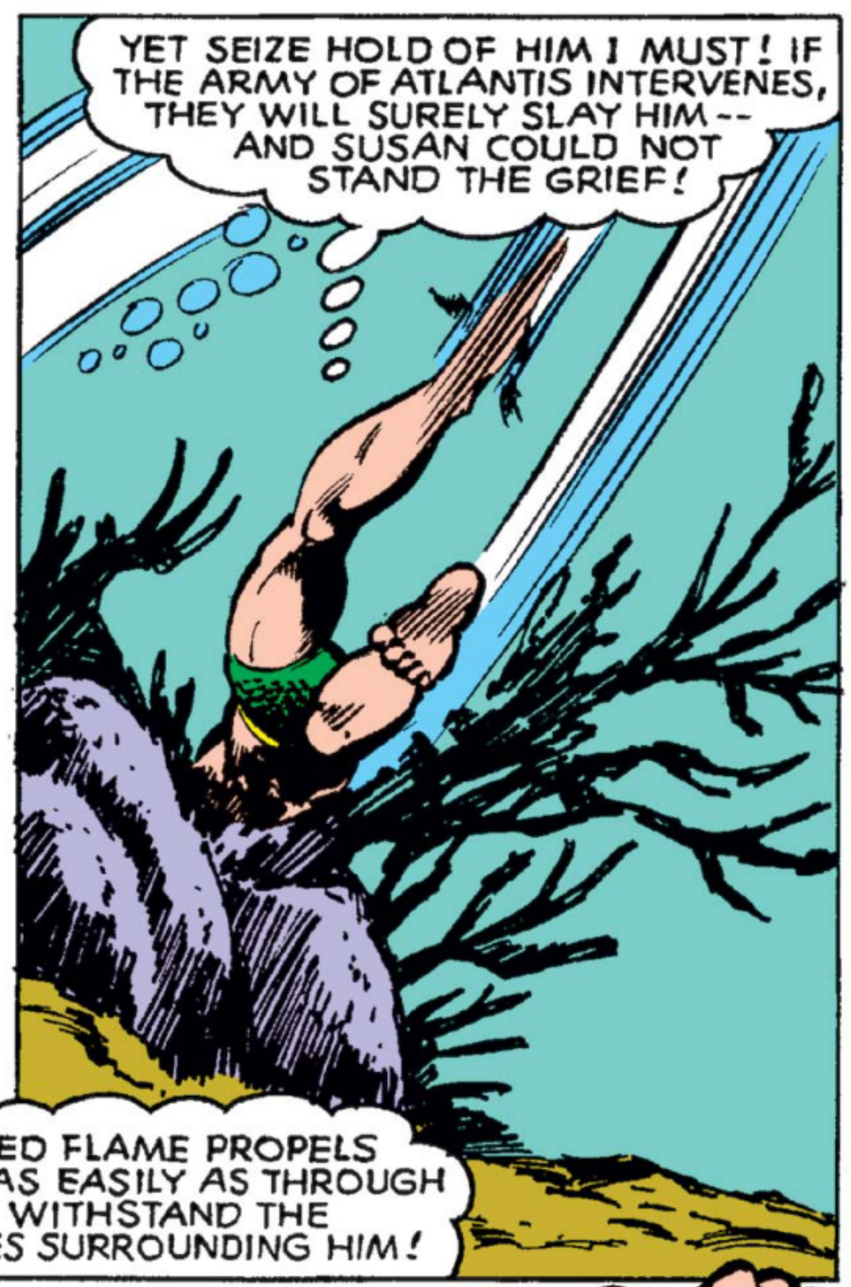

PLEASE, WARLORD KRANG, AS YOU LOVE ME, RESTRAIN THE TROOPS! LET NAMOR TRY TO REASON WITH MY BROTHER!
THANK YOU, KRANG! I --
YOUR DESIRE IS MY COMMAND, MILADY!


Ohhhh...!
QUEEN SUSAN! SUMMON THE MIDWIVES! HER TIME HAS COME!

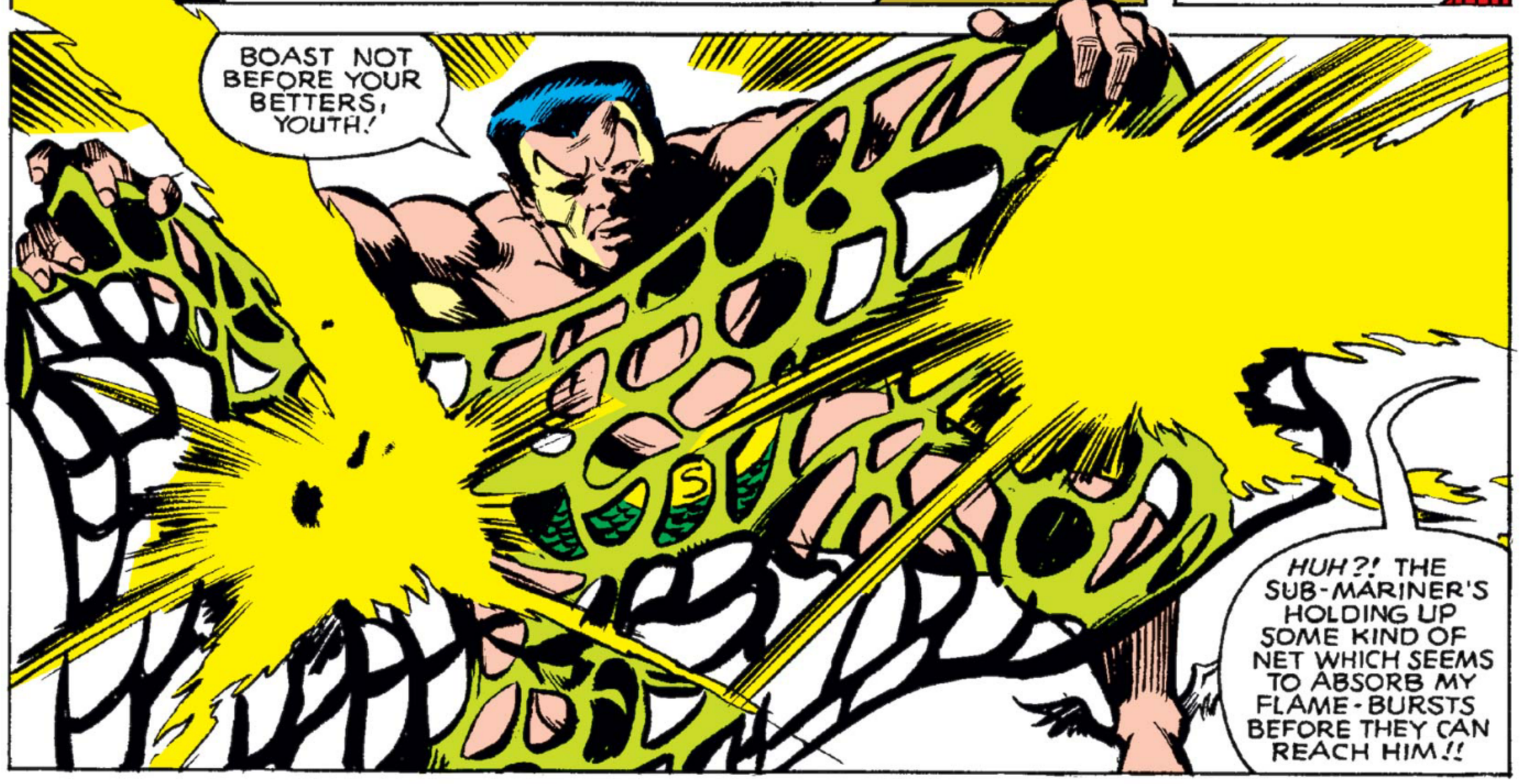

THE ARMY STANDS BY TO AID THE SUB-MARINER!
BUT THE ULTRA-WEAPON IS NOW IN PLACE!

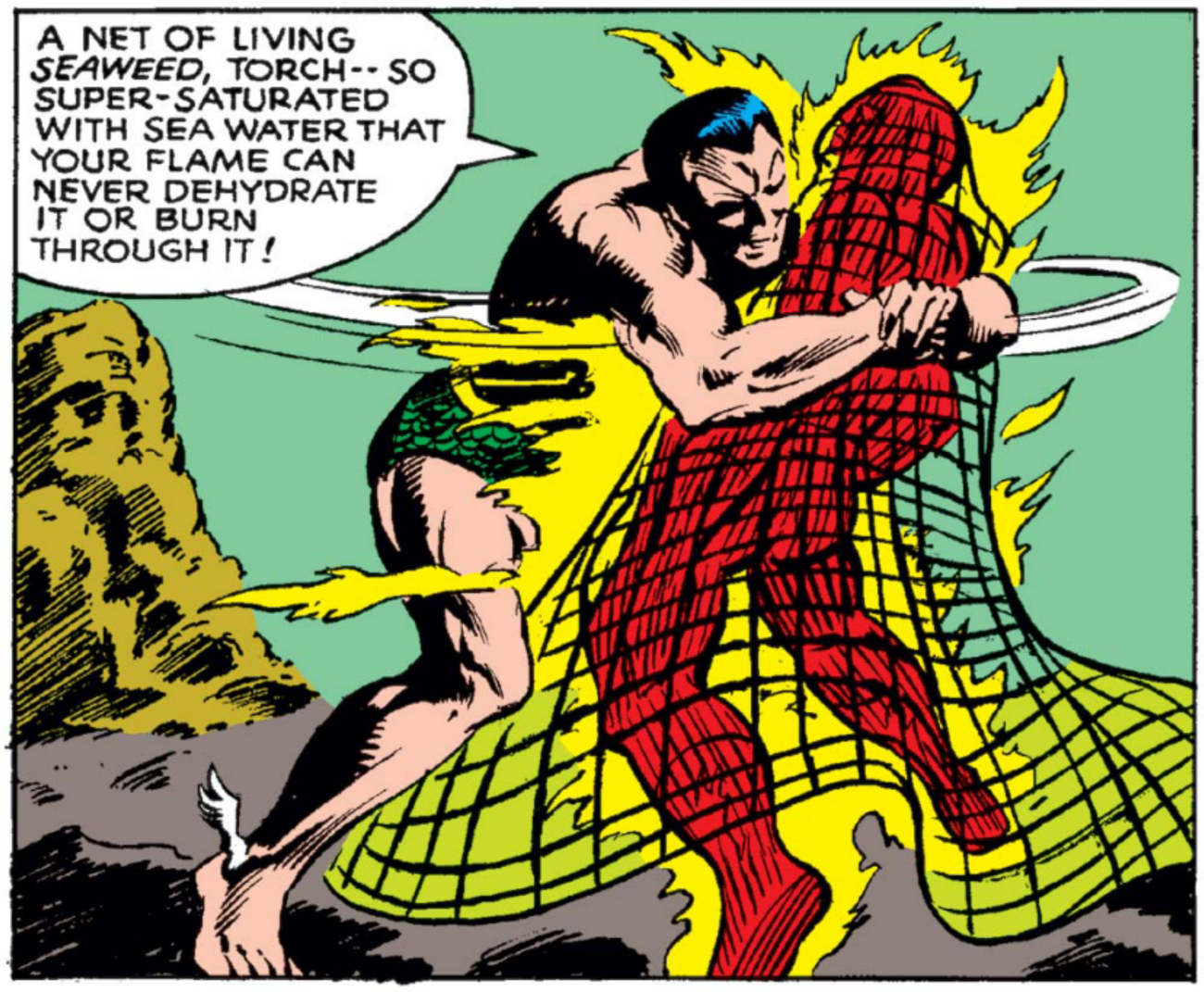
SOON BOTH NAMOR AND ATLANTIS WILL BE BEYOND HELP!
BEFORE THAT HAPPENS, I'VE GOT TO REACH SUE!

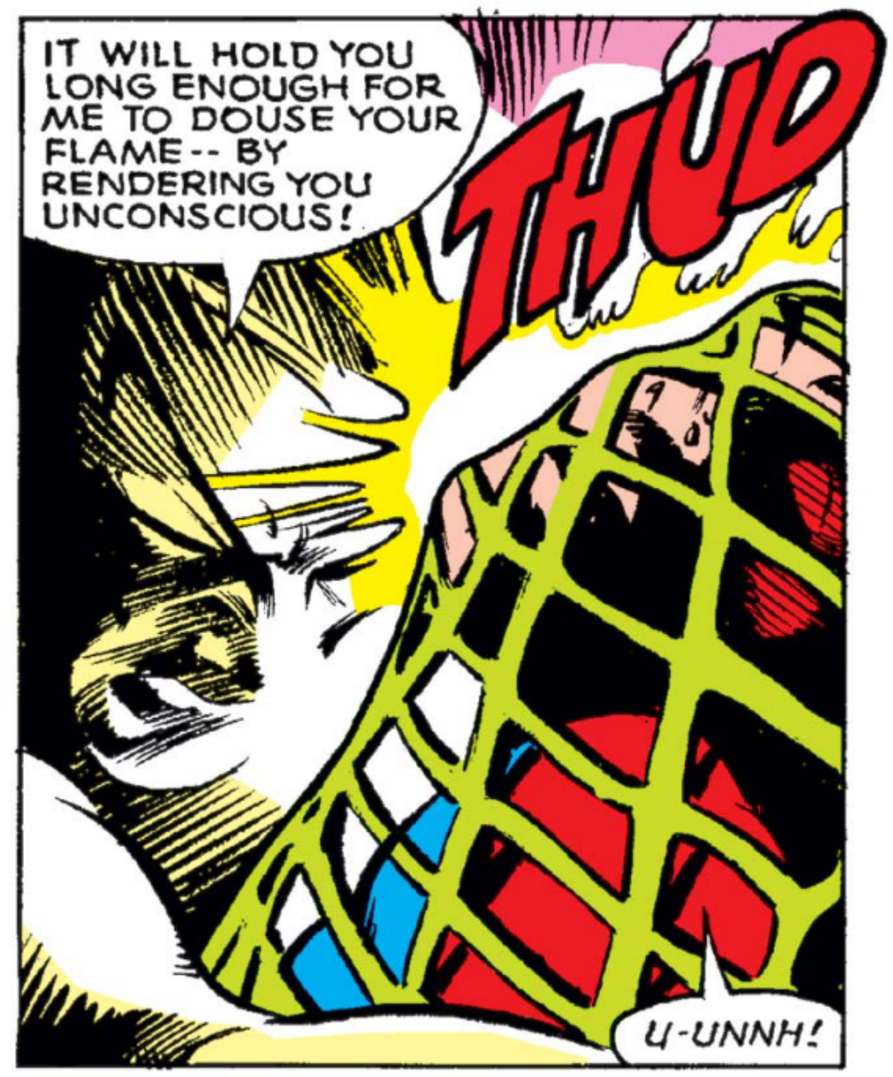

SWIM FOR YOUR LIFE, MAN-FISH, NOT THAT IT'LL DO ANY GOOD!


YET SEIZE HOLD OF HIM I MUST! IF THE ARMY OF ATLANTIS INTERVENES, THEY WILL SURELY SLAY HIM -- AND SUSAN COULD NOT STAND THE GRIEF!
THE TORCH'S ACCURSED FLAME PROPELS HIM THROUGH WATER AS EASILY AS THROUGH AIR! EVEN I CANNOT WITHSTAND THE SEARING TEMPERATURES SURROUNDING HIM!

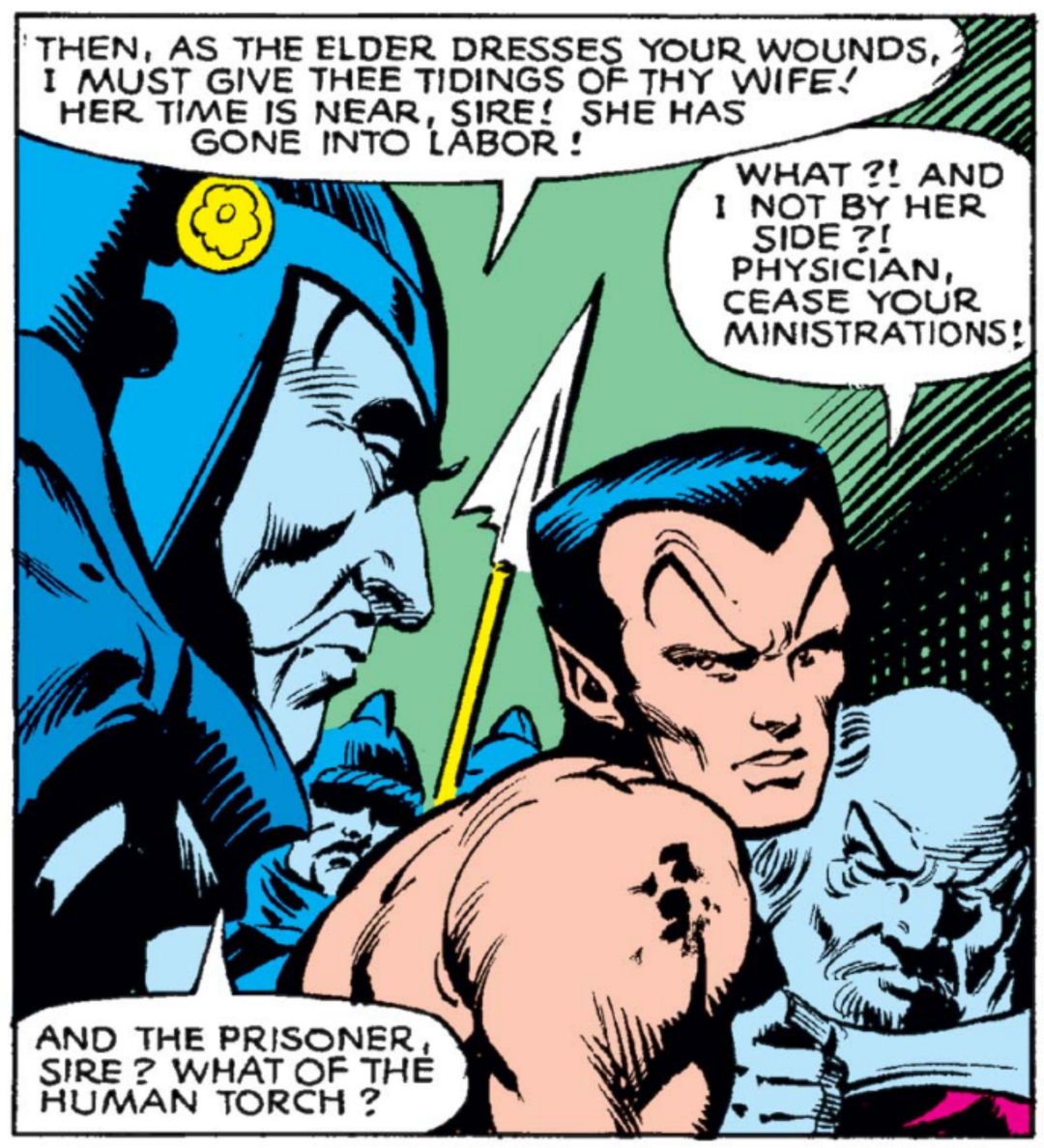
HIDING BEHIND THAT OUTCROPPING OF CORAL WON'T PROTECT YOU FROM MY FLAME, NAMOR!
FIRST I'LL MELT THE CORAL--THEN I'LL MELT YOU!


BOAST NOT BEFORE YOUR BETTERS, YOUTH!
HUH?! THE SUB-MARINER'S HOLDING UP SOME KIND OF NET WHICH SEEMS TO ABSORB MY FLAME-BURSTS BEFORE THEY CAN REACH HIM!!

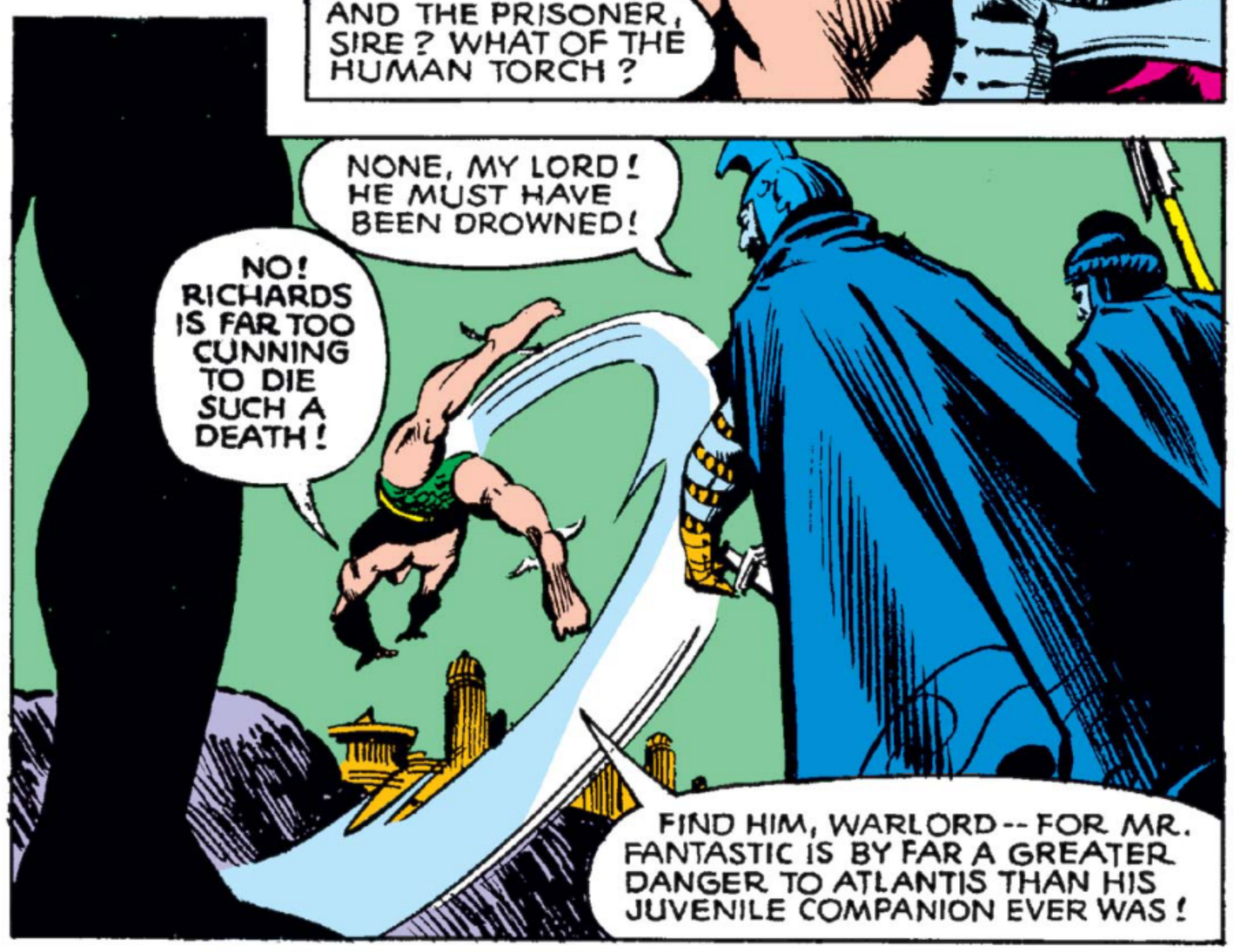

A NET OF LIVING *SEAWEED*, TORCH-- SO SUPER-SATURATED WITH SEA WATER THAT YOUR FLAME CAN NEVER DEHYDRATE IT OR BURN THROUGH IT!

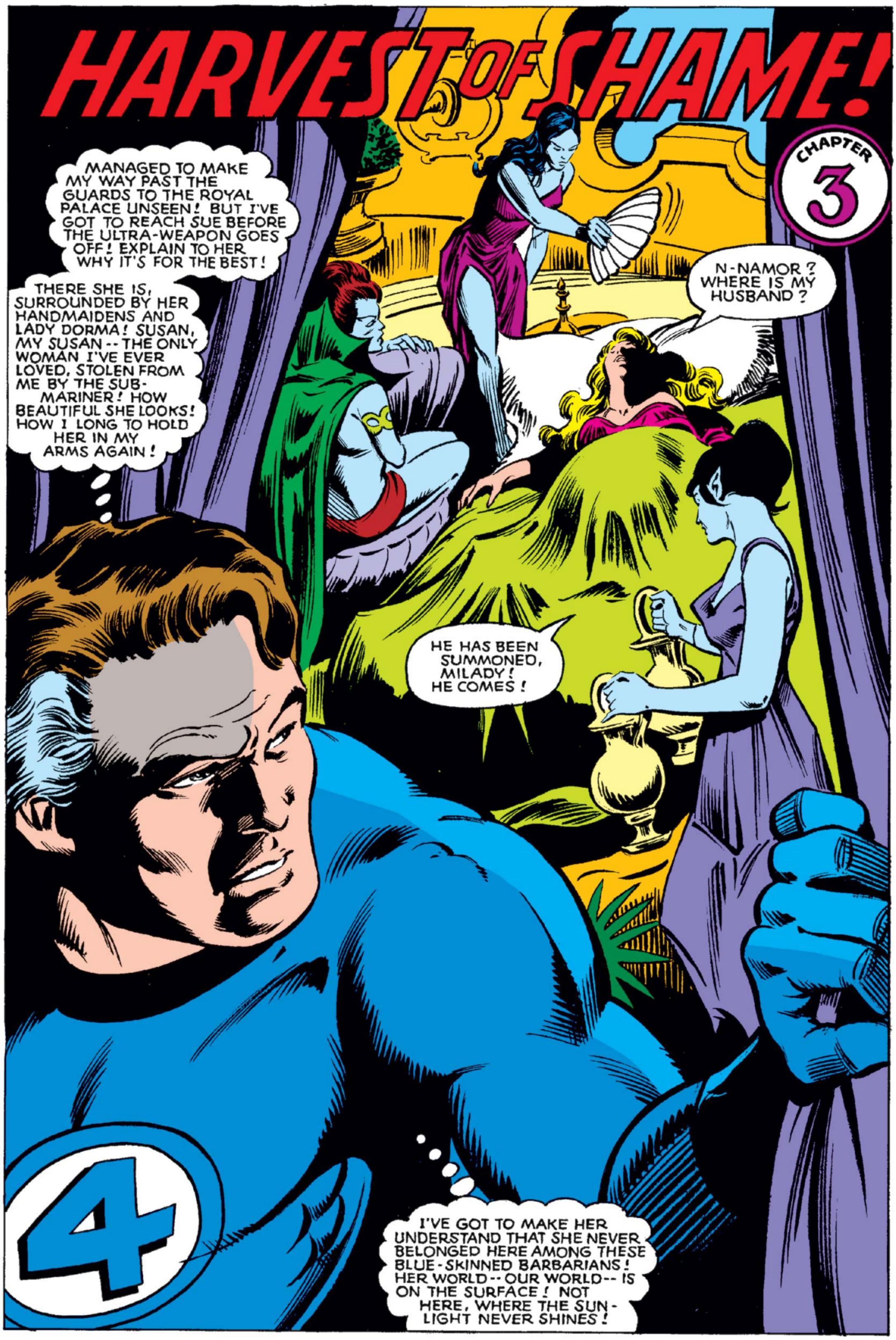

IT WILL HOLD YOU LONG ENOUGH FOR ME TO DOUSE YOUR FLAME-- BY RENDERING YOU UNCONSCIOUS!
THUD
U-UNNH!

MY KING, WE FEARED FOR YOUR SAFETY!
I AM BURNT BADLY, KRANG, BUT THE YOUTH IS SUBDUED!


THEN, AS THE ELDER DRESSES YOUR WOUNDS, I MUST GIVE THEE TIDINGS OF THY WIFE! HER TIME IS NEAR, SIRE! SHE HAS GONE INTO LABOR!
WHAT?! AND I NOT BY HER SIDE?! PHYSICIAN, CEASE YOUR MINISTRATIONS!
AND THE PRISONER, SIRE? WHAT OF THE HUMAN TORCH?

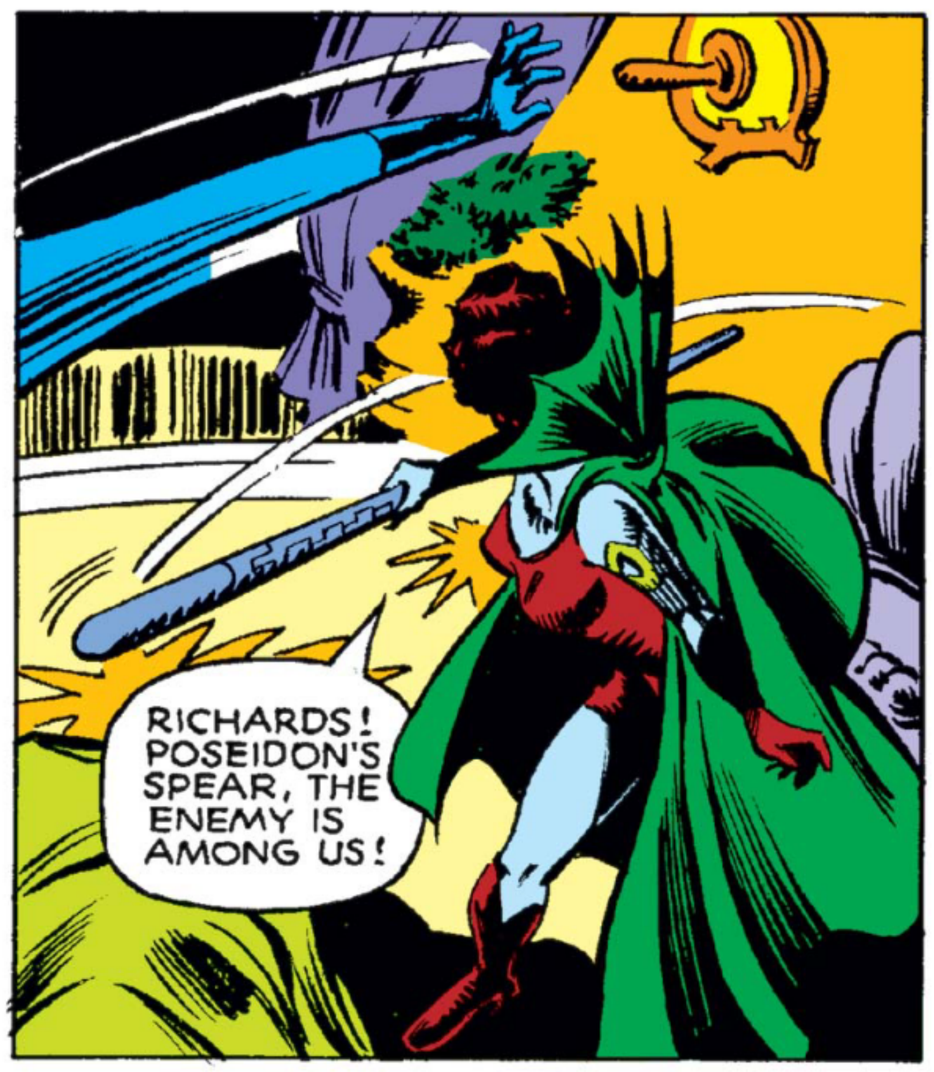
LEAVE HIM BOUND AND BRING HIM TO MY ROYAL CHAMBERS!
IT WILL COMFORT MY WIFE TO SEE HIM UNHARMED!
WHAT NEWS OF HIS COMPANION, MR. FANTASTIC?

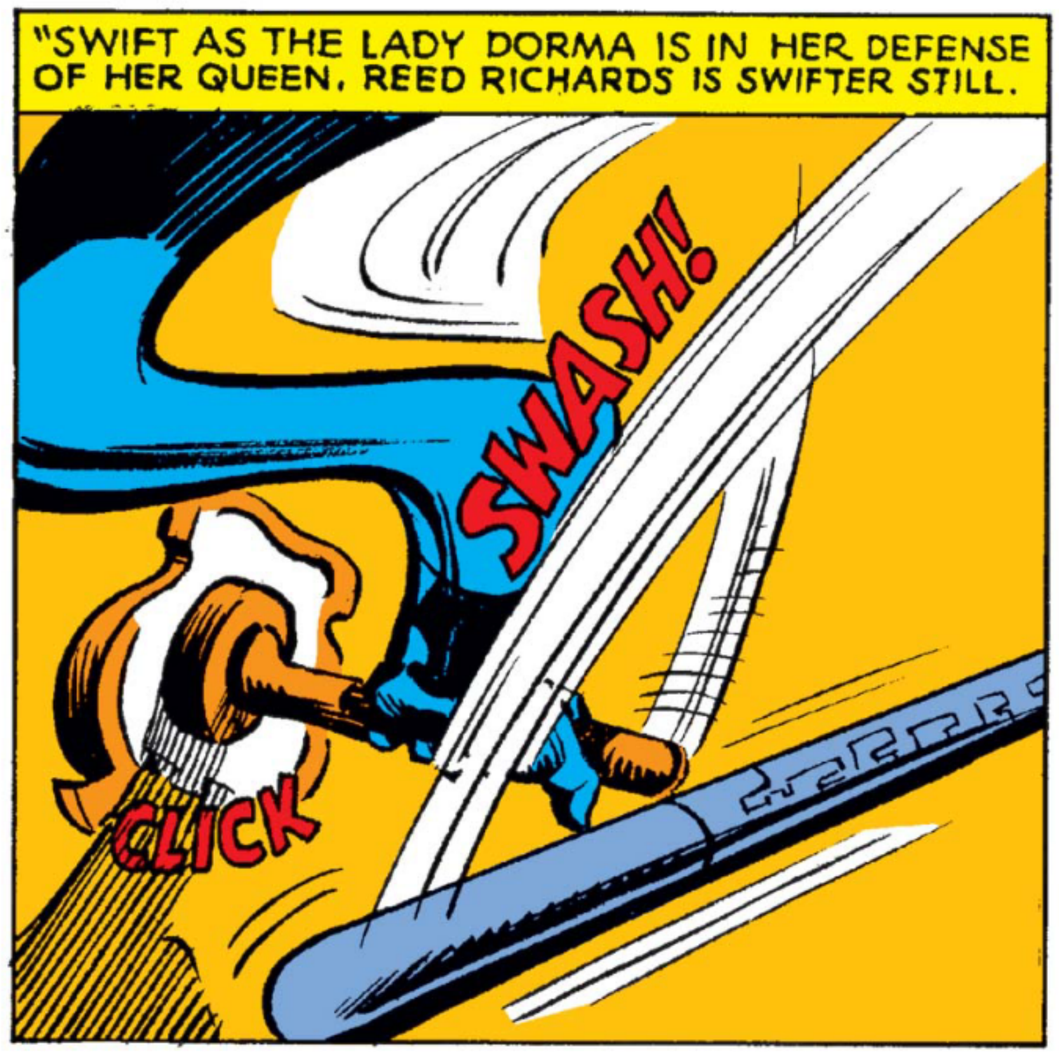

NONE, MY LORD! HE MUST HAVE BEEN DROWNED!
NO! RICHARDS IS FAR TOO CUNNING TO DIE SUCH A DEATH!
FIND HIM, WARLORD-- FOR MR. FANTASTIC IS BY FAR A GREATER DANGER TO ATLANTIS THAN HIS JUVENILE COMPANION EVER WAS!

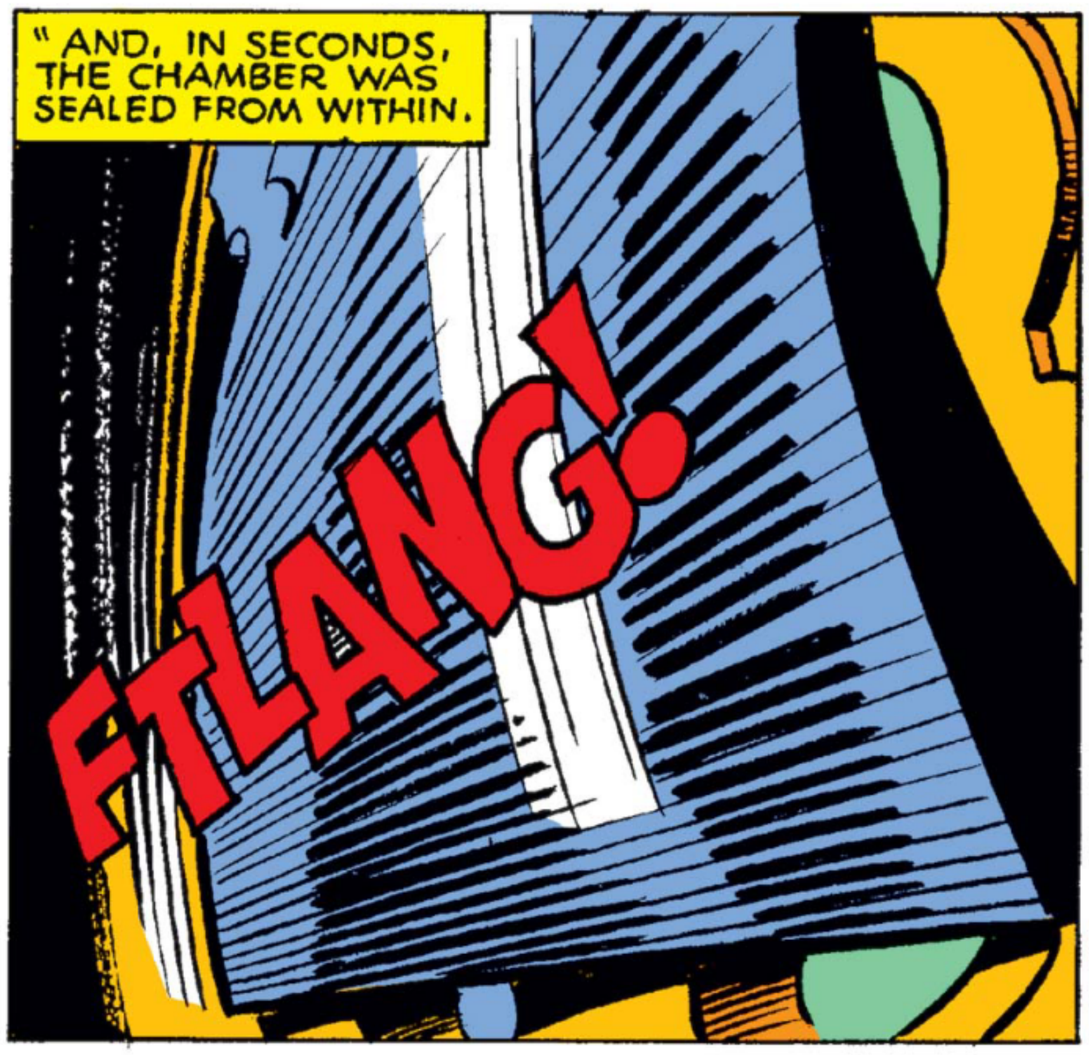

HARVEST OF SHAME!
CHAPTER 3
MANAGED TO MAKE MY WAY PAST THE GUARDS TO THE ROYAL PALACE UNSEEN! BUT I'VE GOT TO REACH SUE BEFORE THE ULTRA-WEAPON GOES OFF! EXPLAIN TO HER WHY IT'S FOR THE BEST!
THERE SHE IS, SURROUNDED BY HER HANDMAIDENS AND LADY DORMA! SUSAN, MY SUSAN -- THE ONLY WOMAN I'VE EVER LOVED, STOLEN FROM ME BY THE SUB-MARINER! HOW BEAUTIFUL SHE LOOKS! HOW I LONG TO HOLD HER IN MY ARMS AGAIN!
N-NAMOR? WHERE IS MY HUSBAND?
HE HAS BEEN SUMMONED, MILADY! HE COMES!
I'VE GOT TO MAKE HER UNDERSTAND THAT SHE NEVER BELONGED HERE AMONG THESE BLUE-SKINNED BARBARIANS! HER WORLD -- OUR WORLD -- IS ON THE SURFACE! NOT HERE, WHERE THE SUN-LIGHT NEVER SHINES!
4

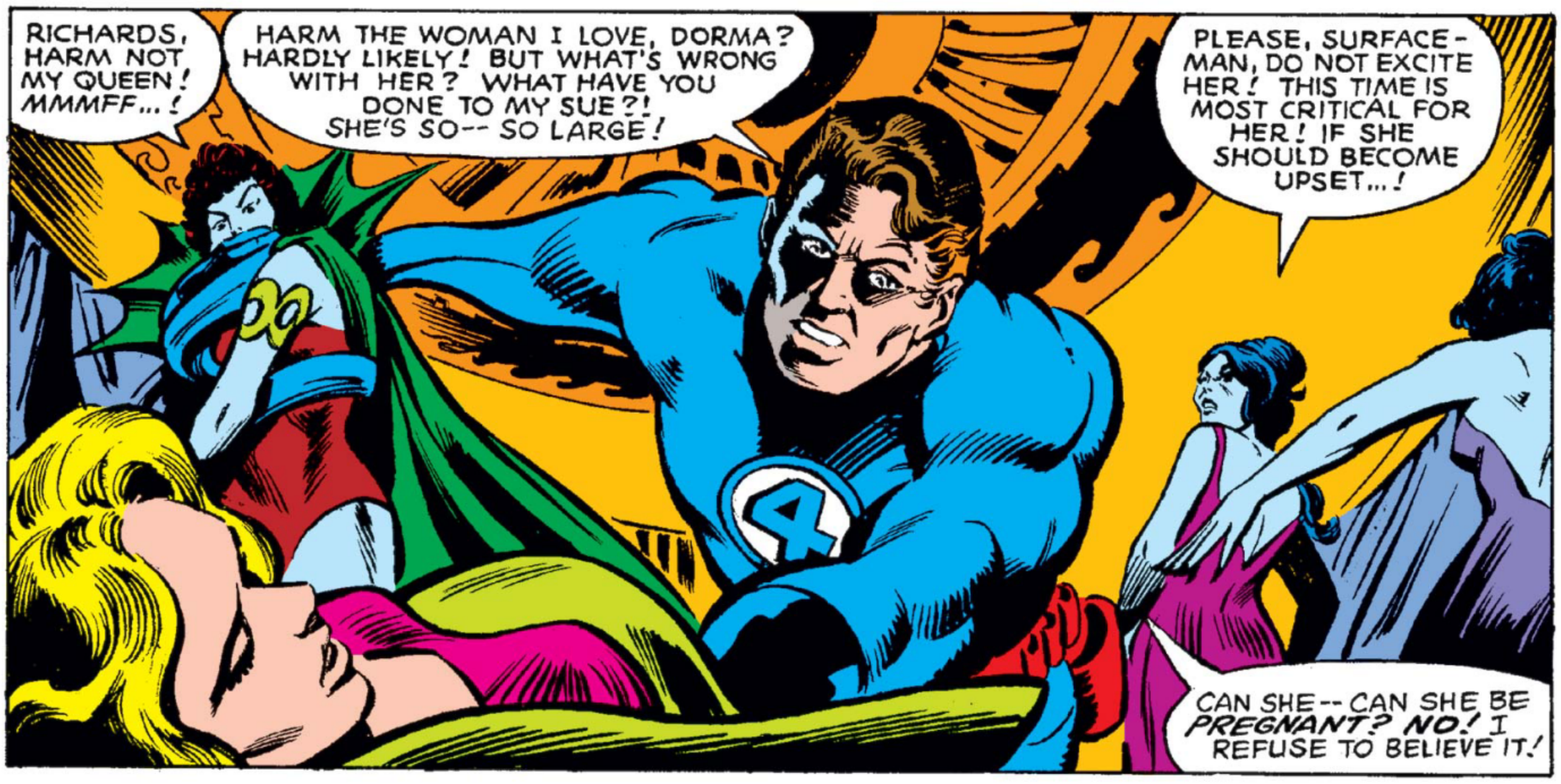
"SEARCHING FOR SOME WAY TO BE ALONE WITH THE WOMAN HE LOVES, REED'S EYES COME TO REST UPON...
THAT SWITCH! IT CONTROLS THIS CHAMBER'S DEFENSES--
--SEALING THE ROOM BEHIND IMPREGNABLE STEEL SHUTTERS IN TIMES OF EMERGENCY!

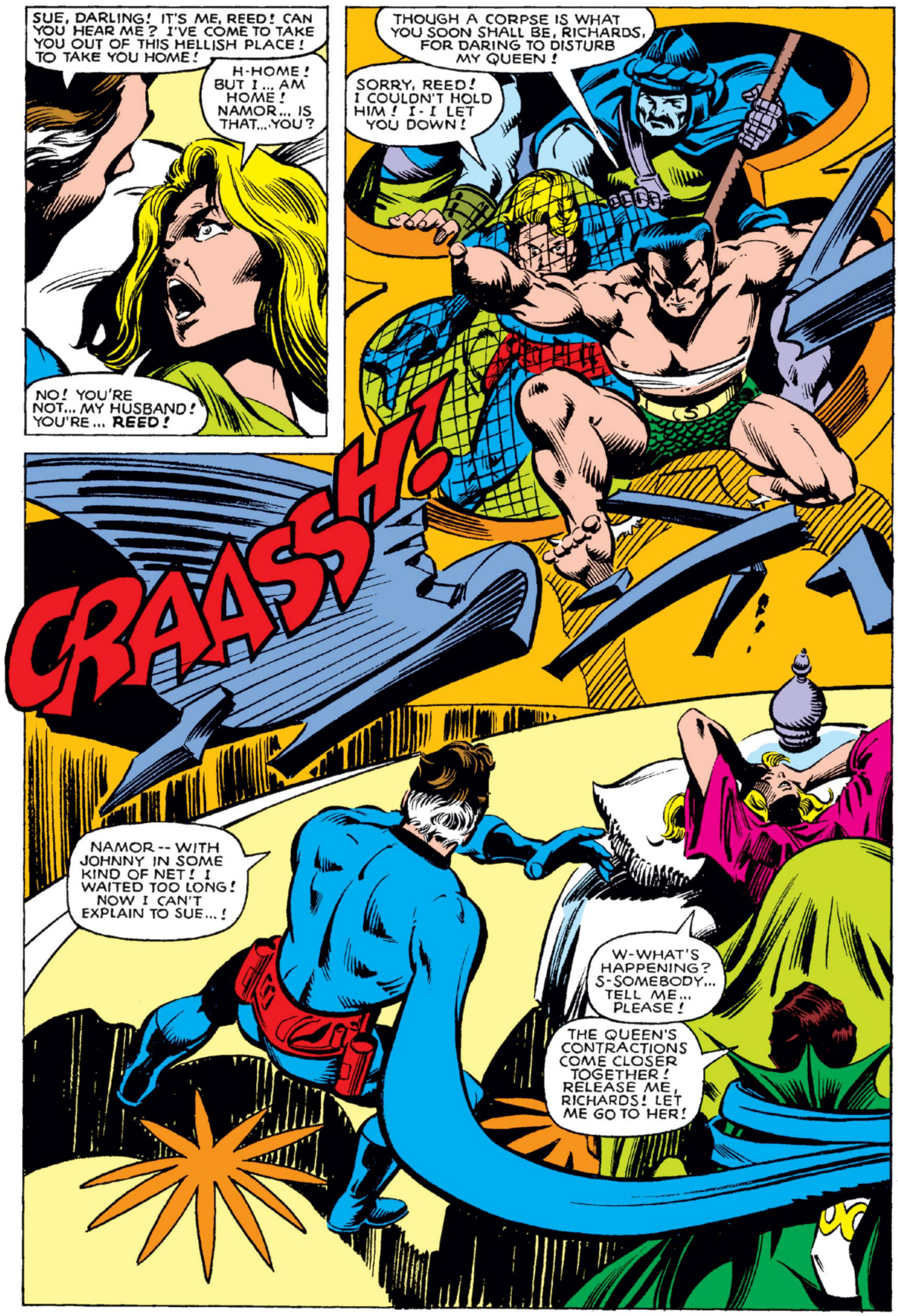
"BUT, AS MR. FANTASTIC MAKES HIS MOVE...
Eh? SOMETHING SLITHERING TOWARD THE DEFENSE SWITCH?

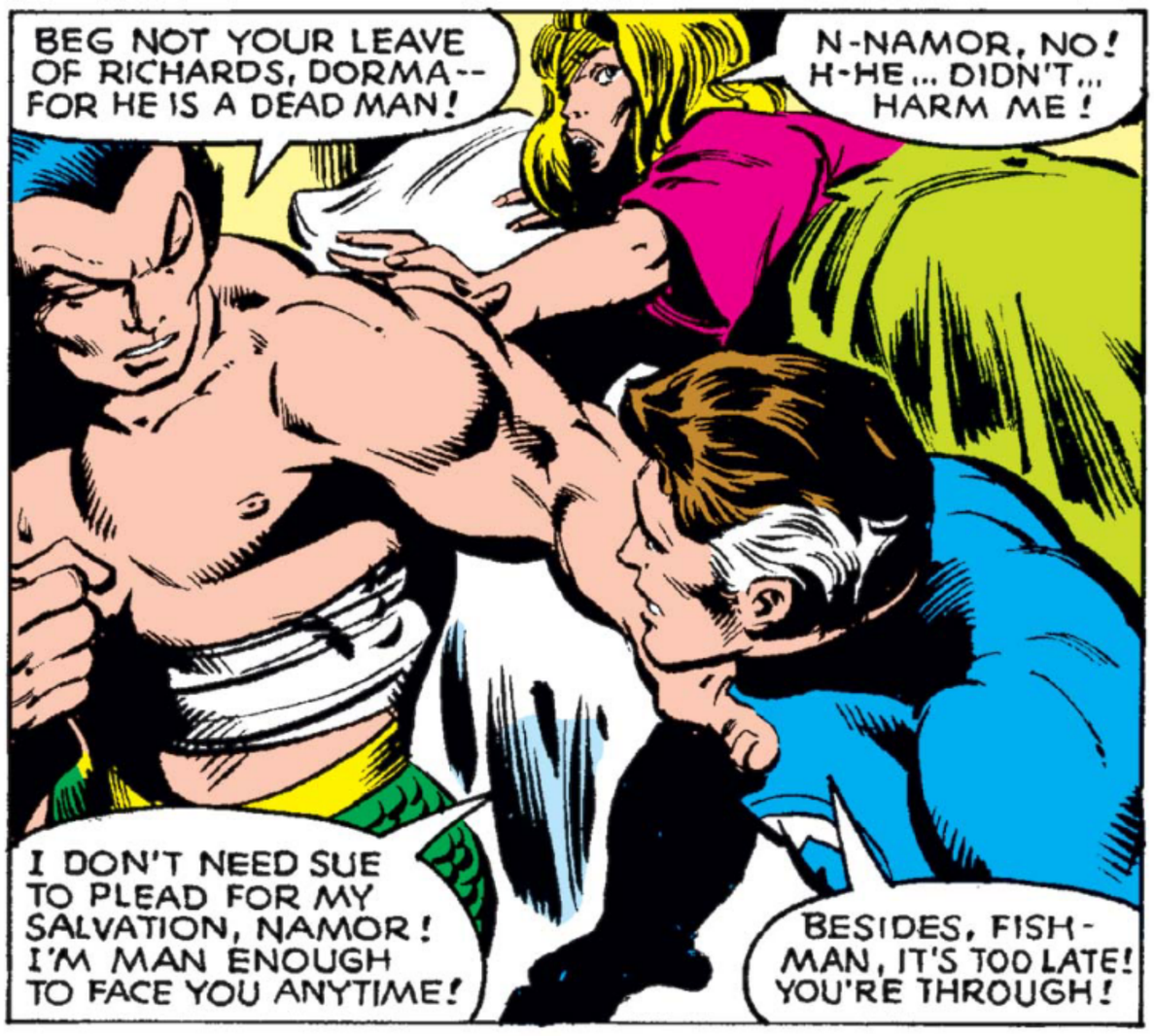

RICHARDS! POSEIDON'S SPEAR, THE ENEMY IS AMONG US!


"SWIFT AS THE LADY DORMA IS IN HER DEFENSE OF HER QUEEN, REED RICHARDS IS SWIFTER STILL.
SWASH!
CLICK


"AND, IN SECONDS, THE CHAMBER WAS SEALED FROM WITHIN.
FTLANG!


RICHARDS, HARM NOT MY QUEEN! MMMFF...!
HARM THE WOMAN I LOVE, DORMA? HARDLY LIKELY! BUT WHAT'S WRONG WITH HER? WHAT HAVE YOU DONE TO MY SUE?! SHE'S SO-- SO LARGE!
PLEASE, SURFACE-MAN, DO NOT EXCITE HER! THIS TIME IS MOST CRITICAL FOR HER! IF SHE SHOULD BECOME UPSET...!
CAN SHE--CAN SHE BE PREGNANT? NO! I REFUSE TO BELIEVE IT!


SUE, DARLING! IT'S ME, REED! CAN YOU HEAR ME? I'VE COME TO TAKE YOU OUT OF THIS HELLISH PLACE! TO TAKE YOU HOME!
H-HOME! BUT I... AM HOME! NAMOR... IS THAT... YOU?
NO! YOU'RE NOT... MY HUSBAND! YOU'RE... REED!
THOUGH A CORPSE IS WHAT YOU SOON SHALL BE, RICHARDS, FOR DARING TO DISTURB MY QUEEN!
SORRY, REED! I COULDN'T HOLD HIM! I-I LET YOU DOWN!
CRAASH!
NAMOR -- WITH JOHNNY IN SOME KIND OF NET! I WAITED TOO LONG! NOW I CAN'T EXPLAIN TO SUE...!
W-WHAT'S HAPPENING? S-SOMEBODY... TELL ME... PLEASE!
THE QUEEN'S CONTRACTIONS COME CLOSER TOGETHER! RELEASE ME, RICHARDS! LET ME GO TO HER!

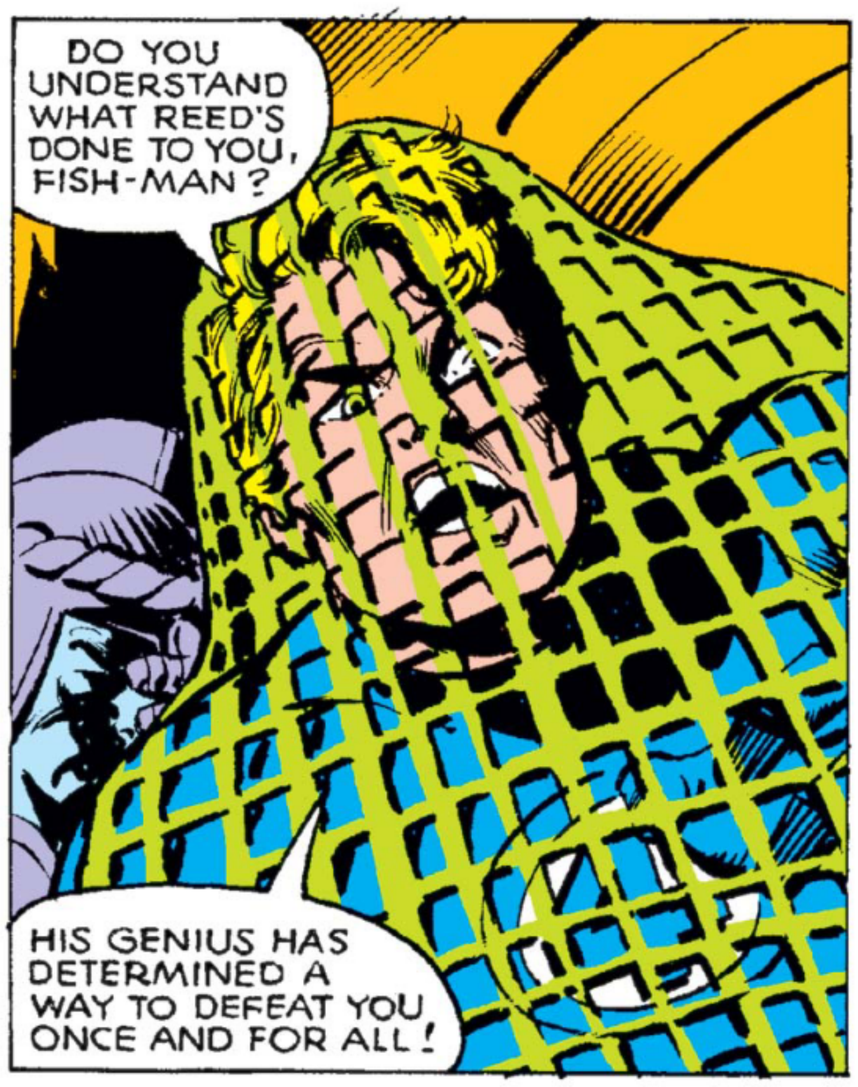

BEG NOT YOUR LEAVE OF RICHARDS, DORMA-- FOR HE IS A DEAD MAN!
N-NAMOR, NO! H-HE... DIDN'T... HARM ME!
I DON'T NEED SUE TO PLEAD FOR MY SALVATION, NAMOR! I'M MAN ENOUGH TO FACE YOU ANYTIME!
BESIDES, FISH-MAN, IT'S TOO LATE! YOU'RE THROUGH!

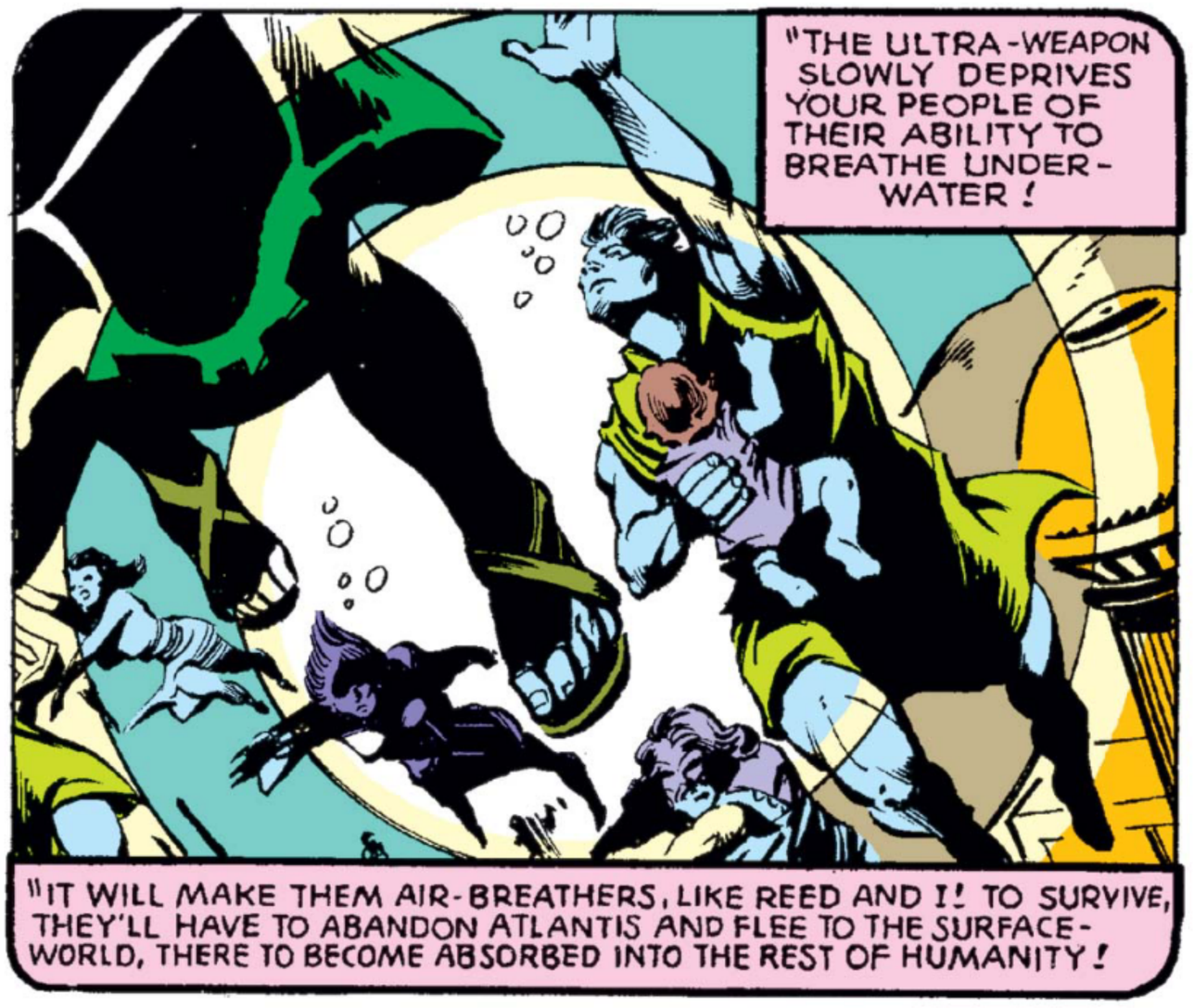
SEE? EVEN NOW YOUR ATLANTEAN ELITE GUARD BEGINS TO GASP, TO CHOKE FOR BREATH!
GASP! RICHARDS IS CORRECT, MILORD!
IT GROWS HARDER TO BREATHE!

THAT'S BECAUSE THEIR GILLS ARE NO LONGER ABLE TO EXTRACT THE NEEDED OXYGEN FROM THE WATER, NAMOR!
AND MY HIDDEN ULTRA-WEAPON IS THE CAUSE!

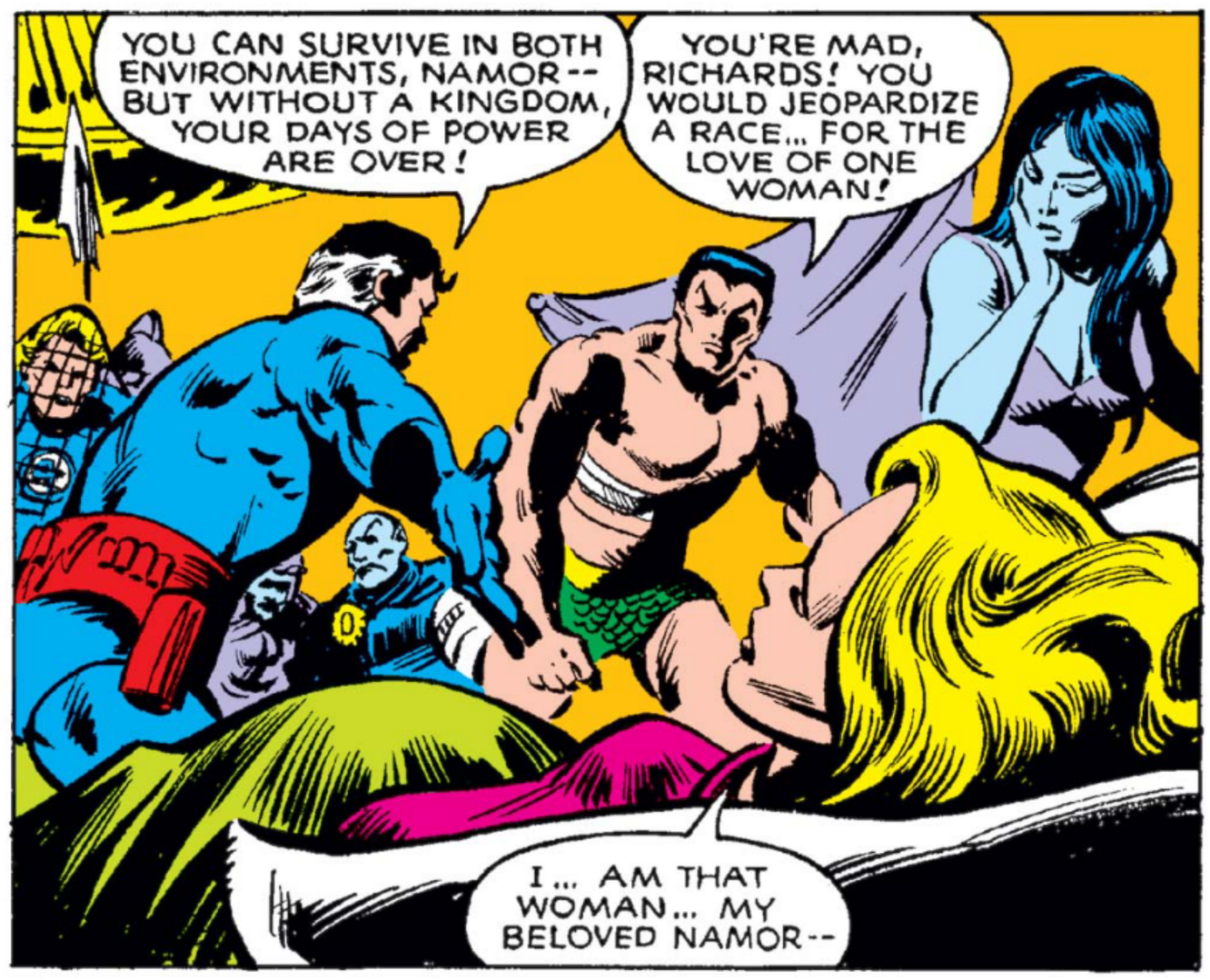
"EVEN AS WE SPEAK IT BEAMS ITS RAYS INTO EVERY CORNER OF YOUR KINGDOM!

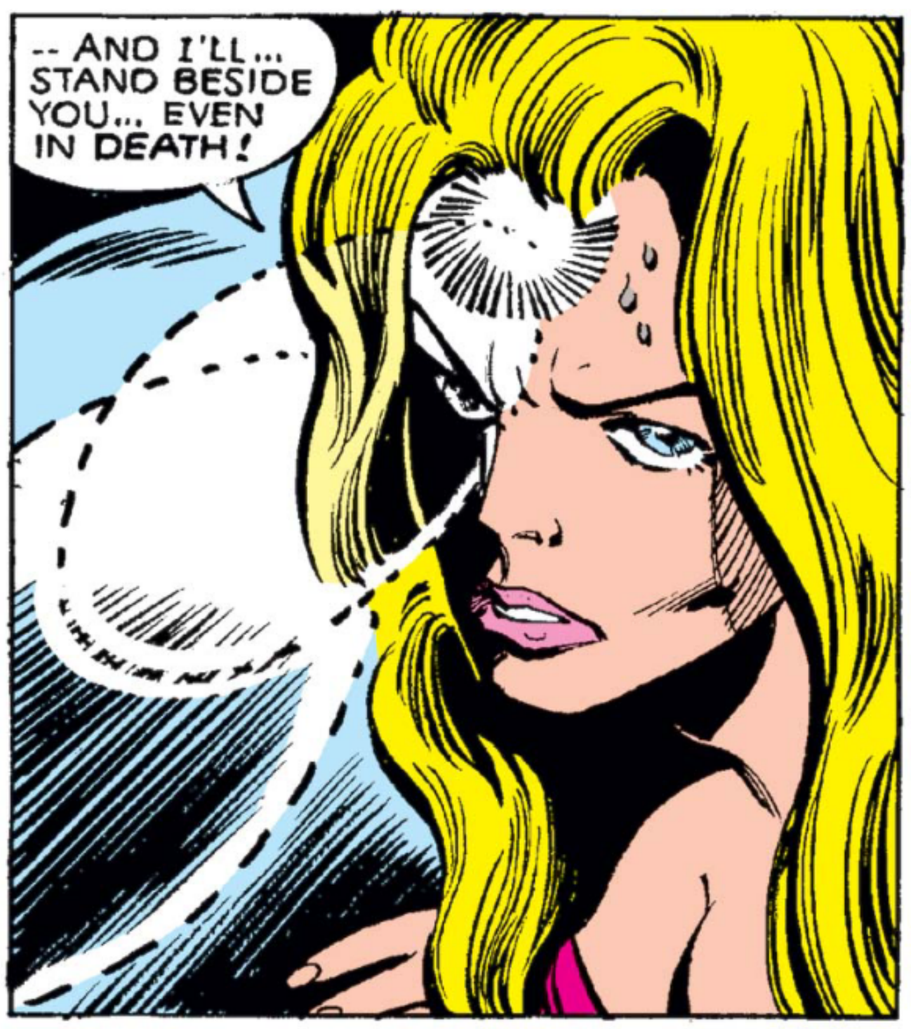
"SOON YOUR FRIGHTENED POPULACE WILL BEGIN TO FEEL ITS EFFECTS!
"THEY WILL BEG FOR YOUR HELP... BUT YOU WILL BE HELPLESS!"

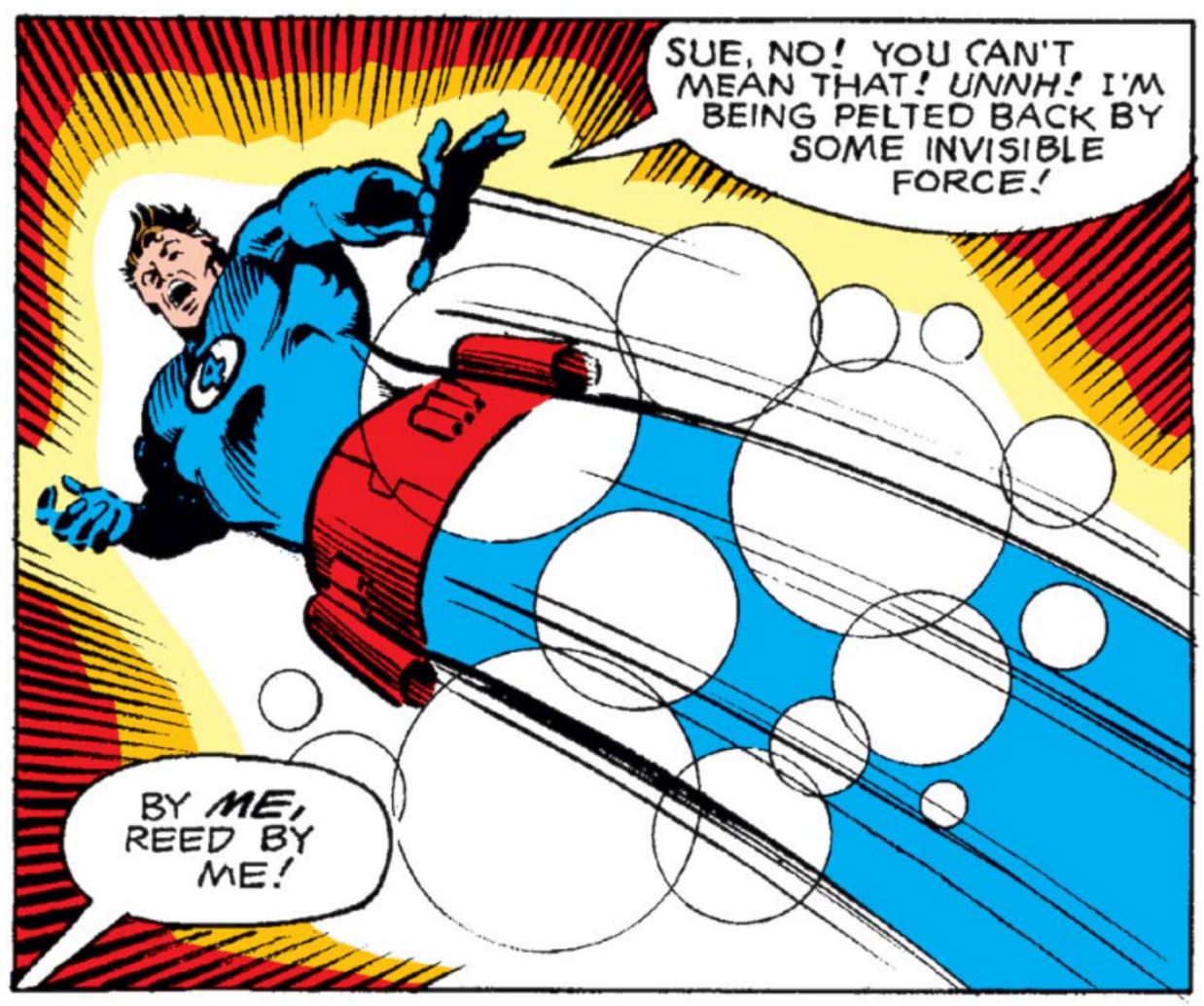

DO YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT REED'S DONE TO YOU, FISH-MAN?
HIS GENIUS HAS DETERMINED A WAY TO DEFEAT YOU ONCE AND FOR ALL!

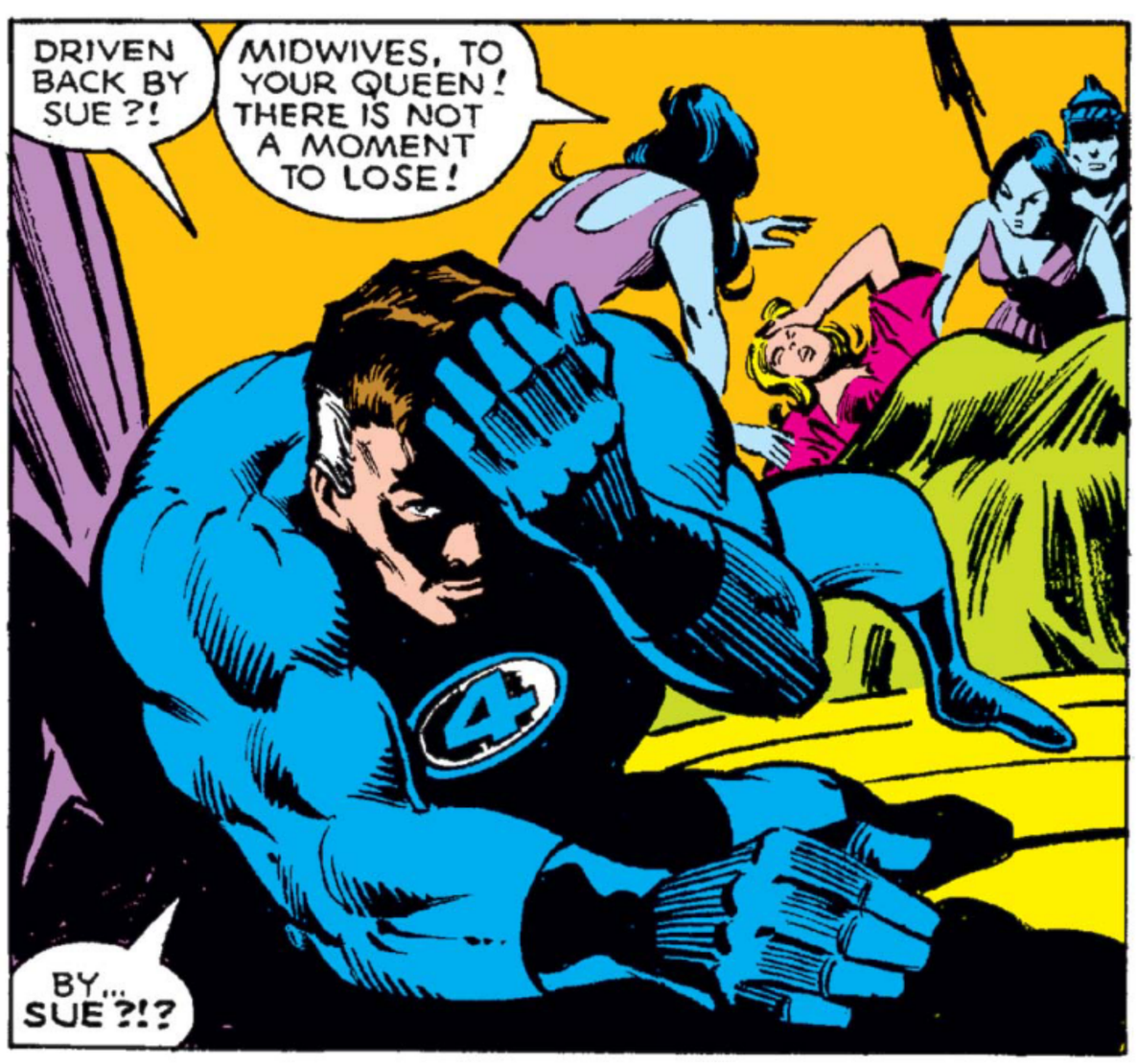

"THE ULTRA-WEAPON SLOWLY DEPRIVES YOUR PEOPLE OF THEIR ABILITY TO BREATHE UNDER-WATER!
"IT WILL MAKE THEM AIR-BREATHERS, LIKE REED AND I! TO SURVIVE, THEY'LL HAVE TO ABANDON ATLANTIS AND FLEE TO THE SURFACE-WORLD, THERE TO BECOME ABSORBED INTO THE REST OF HUMANITY!

"AND YOU, NAMOR, WILL FIND YOURSELF A KING WITHOUT SUBJECTS!"

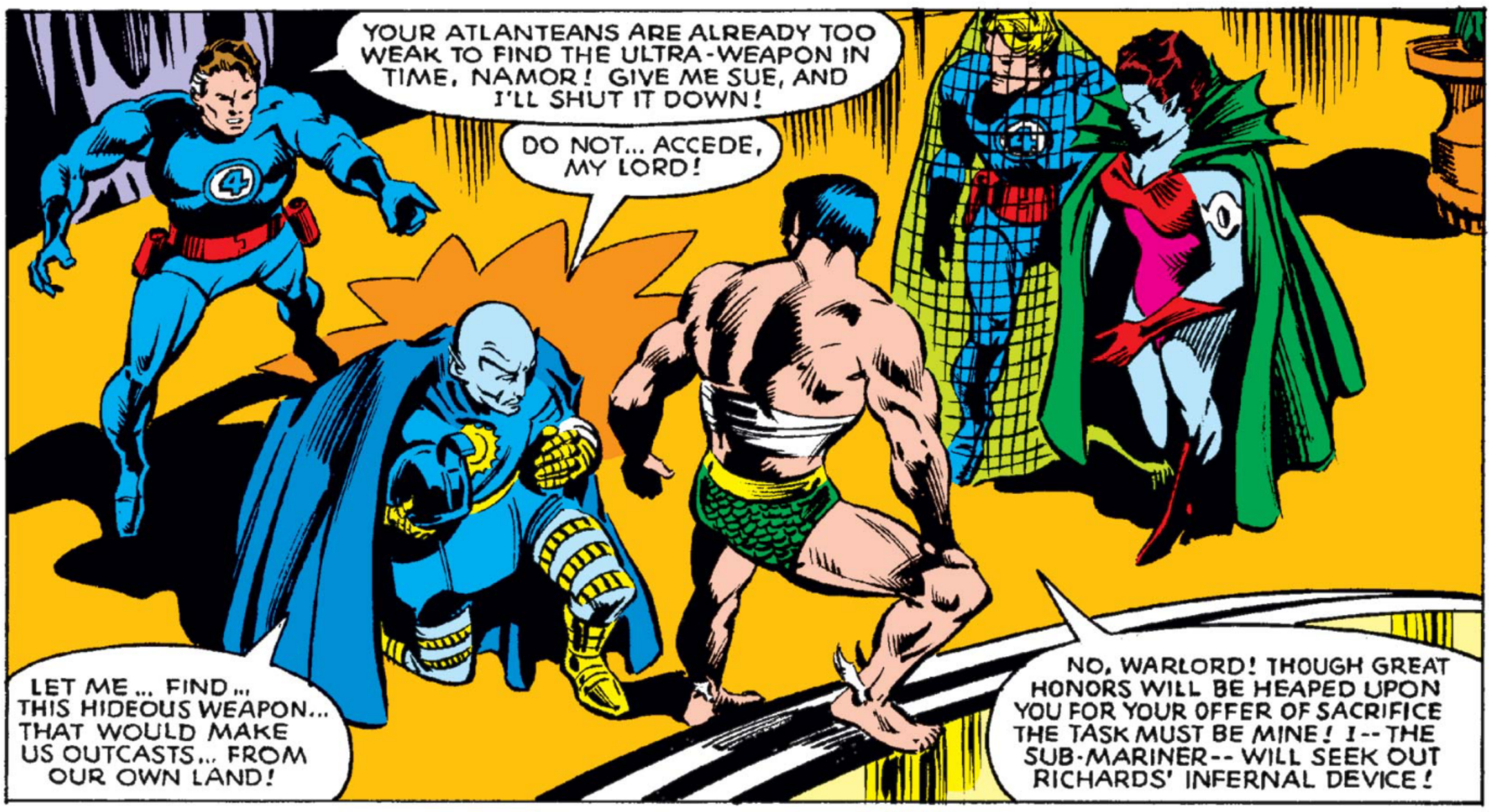

YOU CAN SURVIVE IN BOTH ENVIRONMENTS, NAMOR -- BUT WITHOUT A KINGDOM, YOUR DAYS OF POWER ARE OVER!
YOU'RE MAD, RICHARDS! YOU WOULD JEOPARDIZE A RACE... FOR THE LOVE OF ONE WOMAN!
I... AM THAT WOMAN... MY BELOVED NAMOR--


-- AND I'LL... STAND BESIDE YOU... EVEN IN DEATH!


SUE, NO! YOU CAN'T MEAN THAT! UNNH! I'M BEING PELTED BACK BY SOME INVISIBLE FORCE!
BY ME, REED BY ME!

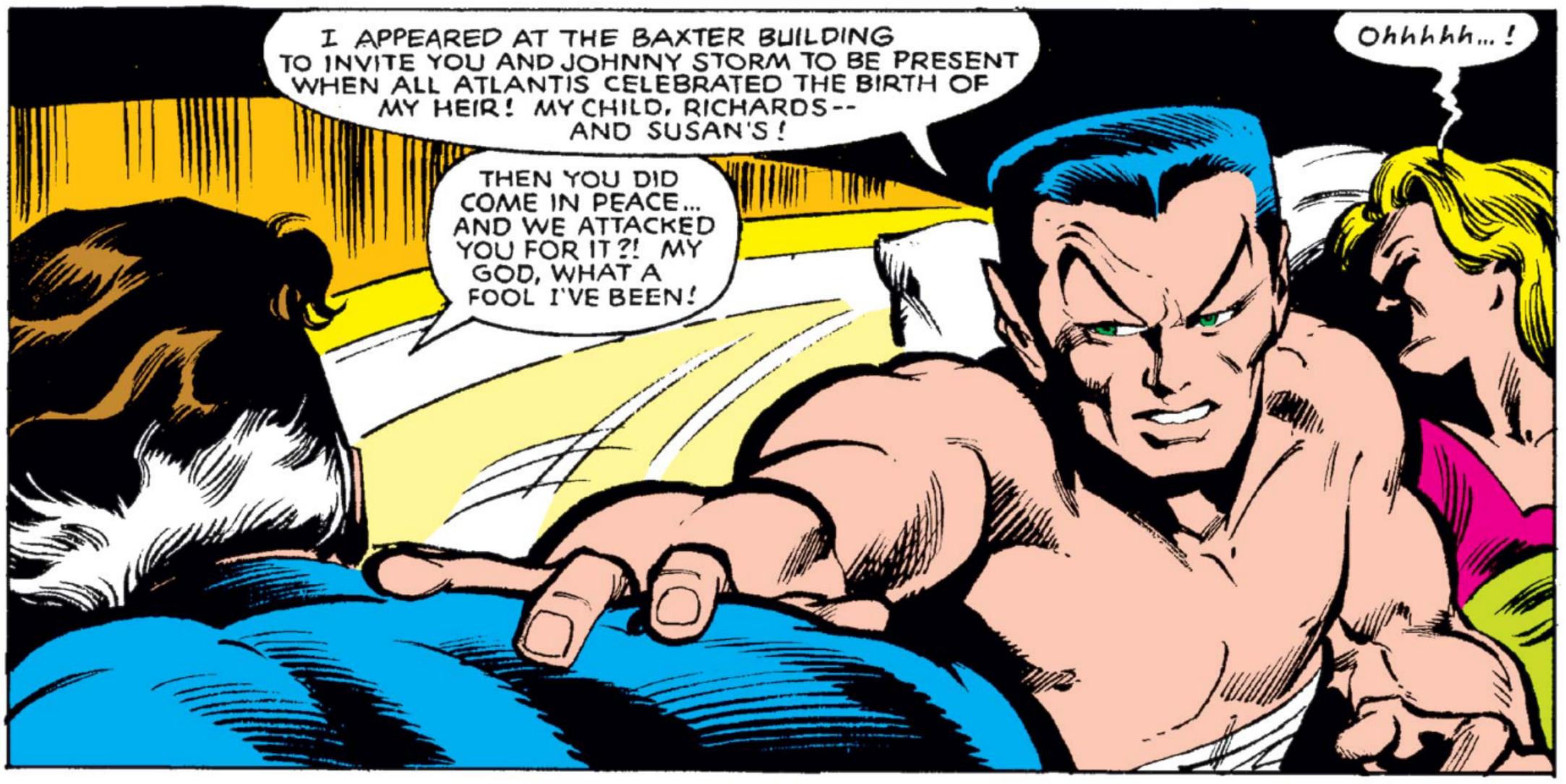

DRIVEN BACK BY SUE?!
MIDWIVES, TO YOUR QUEEN! THERE IS NOT A MOMENT TO LOSE!
BY... SUE?!?

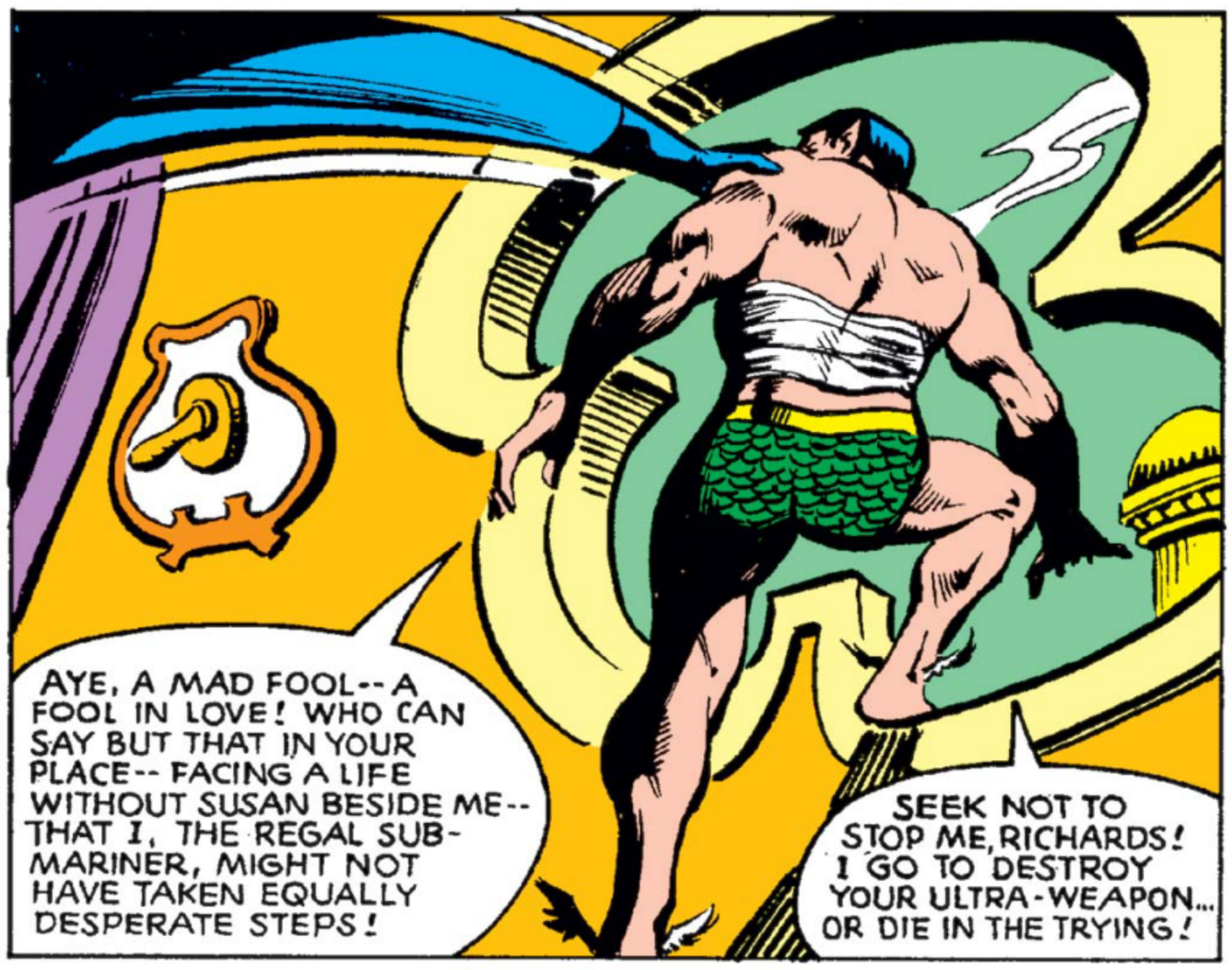
GUARDS! ORDER OUT EVERY GARRISON! FIND THE ULTRA-WEAPON!
WE OBEY, LORD NAMOR--THOUGH IT GROWS... SO DIFFICULT ...TO EVEN MOVE!

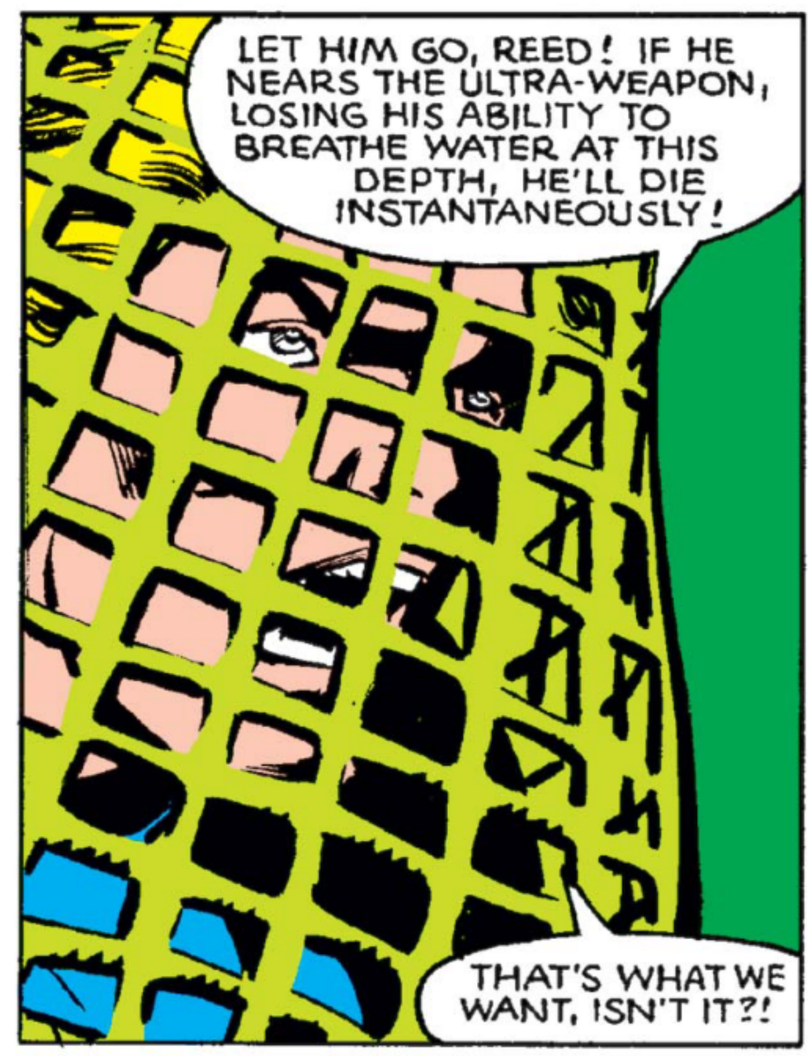

YOUR ATLANTEANS ARE ALREADY TOO WEAK TO FIND THE ULTRA-WEAPON IN TIME, NAMOR! GIVE ME SUE, AND I'LL SHUT IT DOWN!
DO NOT... ACCEDE, MY LORD!
LET ME... FIND... THIS HIDEOUS WEAPON... THAT WOULD MAKE US OUTCASTS... FROM OUR OWN LAND!
NO, WARLORD! THOUGH GREAT HONORS WILL BE HEAPED UPON YOU FOR YOUR OFFER OF SACRIFICE THE TASK MUST BE MINE! I-- THE SUB-MARINER-- WILL SEEK OUT RICHARDS' INFERNAL DEVICE!

YOU THINK YOURSELF SO WISE, SO CUNNING, RICHARDS! AYE, 'TIS TRUE THIS GAMBIT OF YOURS WILL RETURN SUSAN TO HER FORMER, AIR-BREATHING STATE-- BUT THE VERY SHOCK WILL KILL SUSAN AND HER AS YET UNBORN CHILD!
IS THIS YOUR GREAT LOVE, SURFACE-MAN-- TO MURDER A WOMAN WHO WANTS YOU NOT??

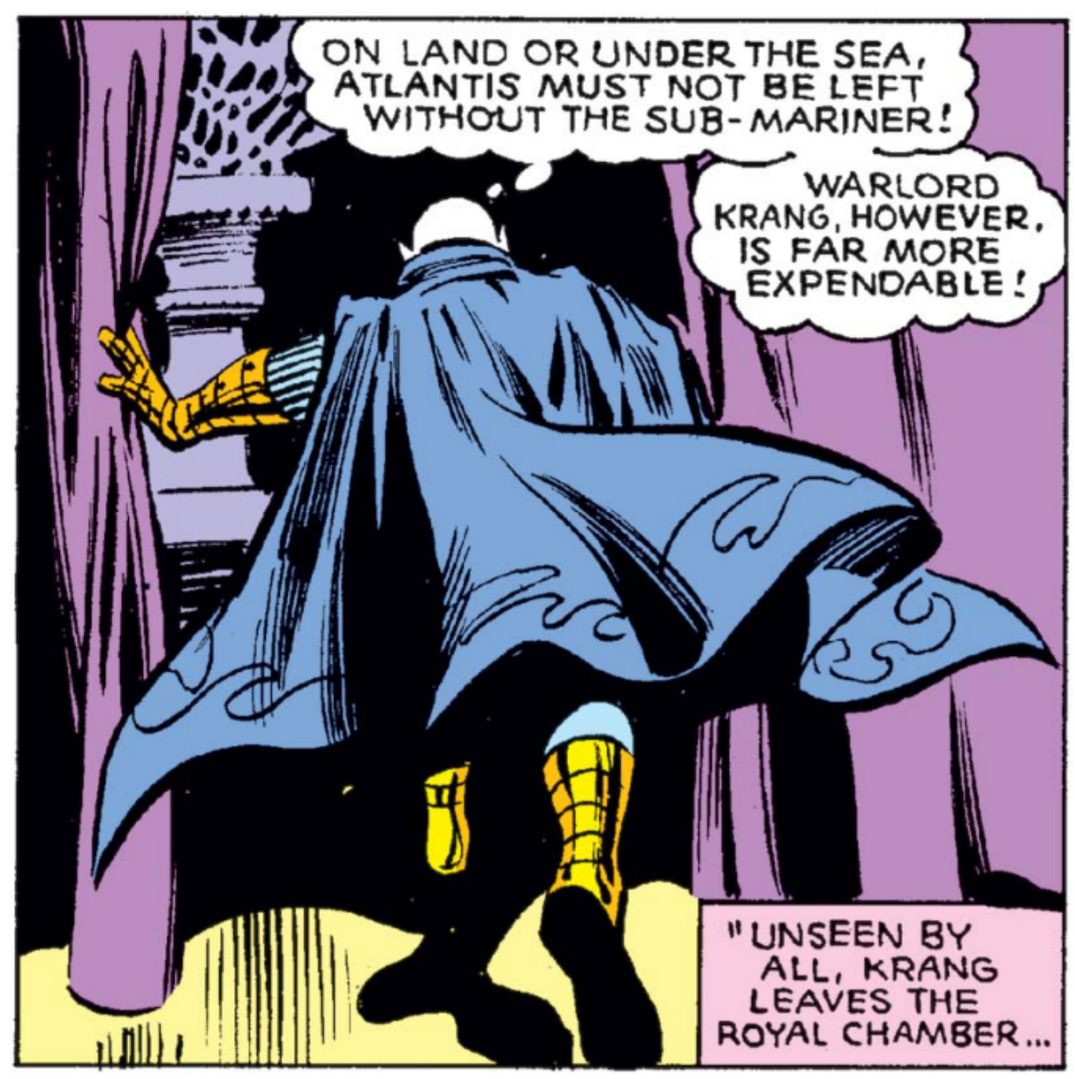
MURDER... SUE?

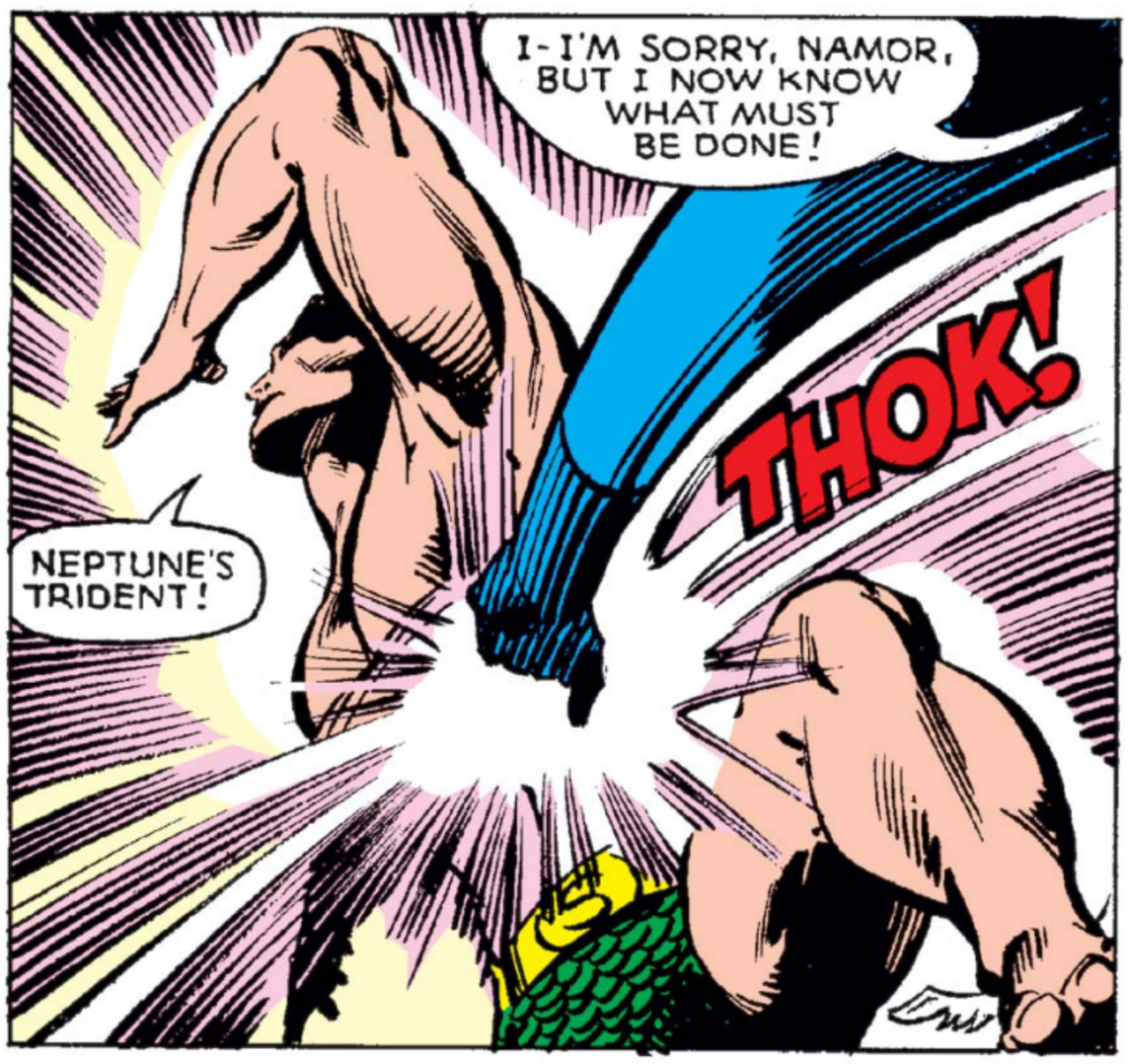

I APPEARED AT THE BAXTER BUILDING TO INVITE YOU AND JOHNNY STORM TO BE PRESENT WHEN ALL ATLANTIS CELEBRATED THE BIRTH OF MY HEIR! MY CHILD, RICHARDS-- AND SUSAN'S!
THEN YOU DID COME IN PEACE... AND WE ATTACKED YOU FOR IT?! MY GOD, WHAT A FOOL I'VE BEEN!
Ohhhhh...!

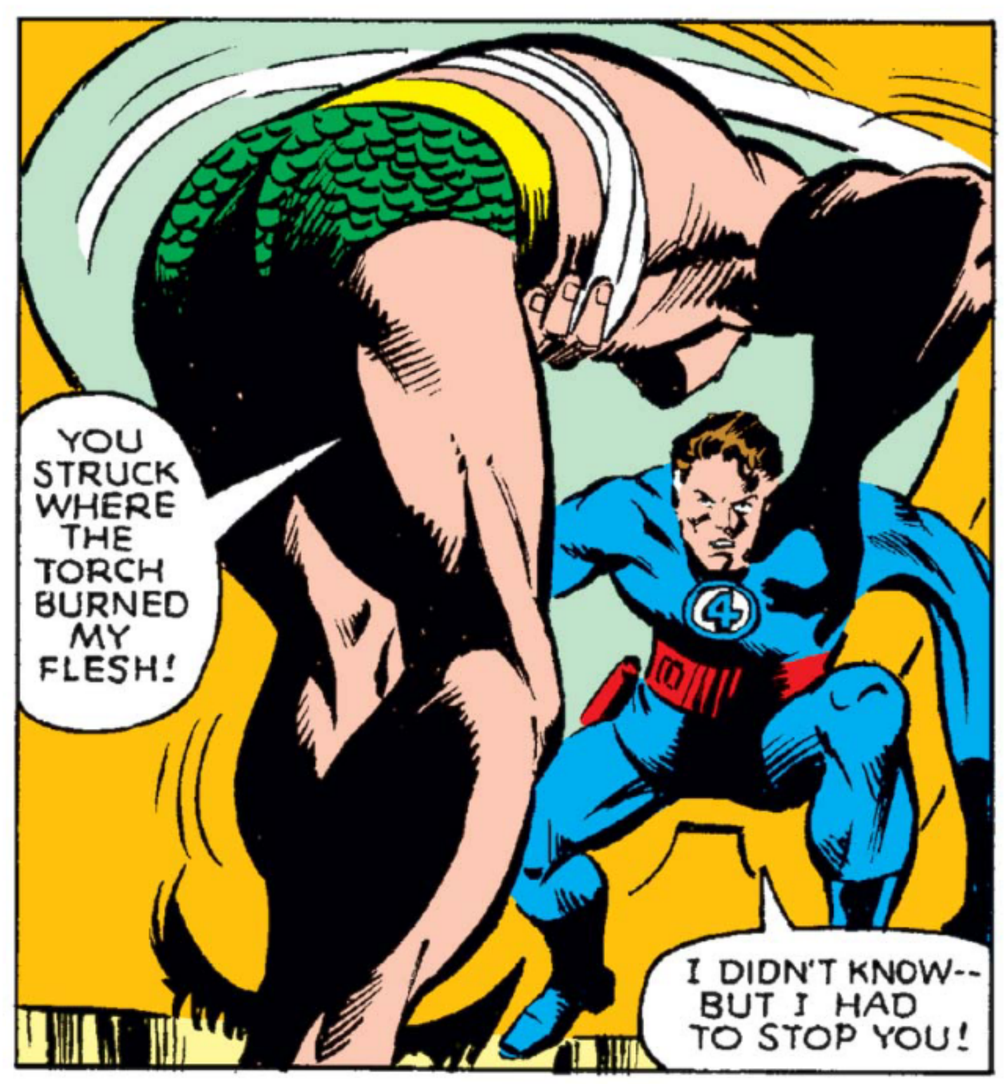

AYE, A MAD FOOL--A FOOL IN LOVE! WHO CAN SAY BUT THAT IN YOUR PLACE-- FACING A LIFE WITHOUT SUSAN BESIDE ME-- THAT I, THE REGAL SUB-MARINER, MIGHT NOT HAVE TAKEN EQUALLY DESPERATE STEPS!
SEEK NOT TO STOP ME, RICHARDS! I GO TO DESTROY YOUR ULTRA-WEAPON... OR DIE IN THE TRYING!


LET HIM GO, REED! IF HE NEARS THE ULTRA-WEAPON, LOSING HIS ABILITY TO BREATHE WATER AT THIS DEPTH, HE'LL DIE INSTANTANEOUSLY!
THAT'S WHAT WE WANT, ISN'T IT?!

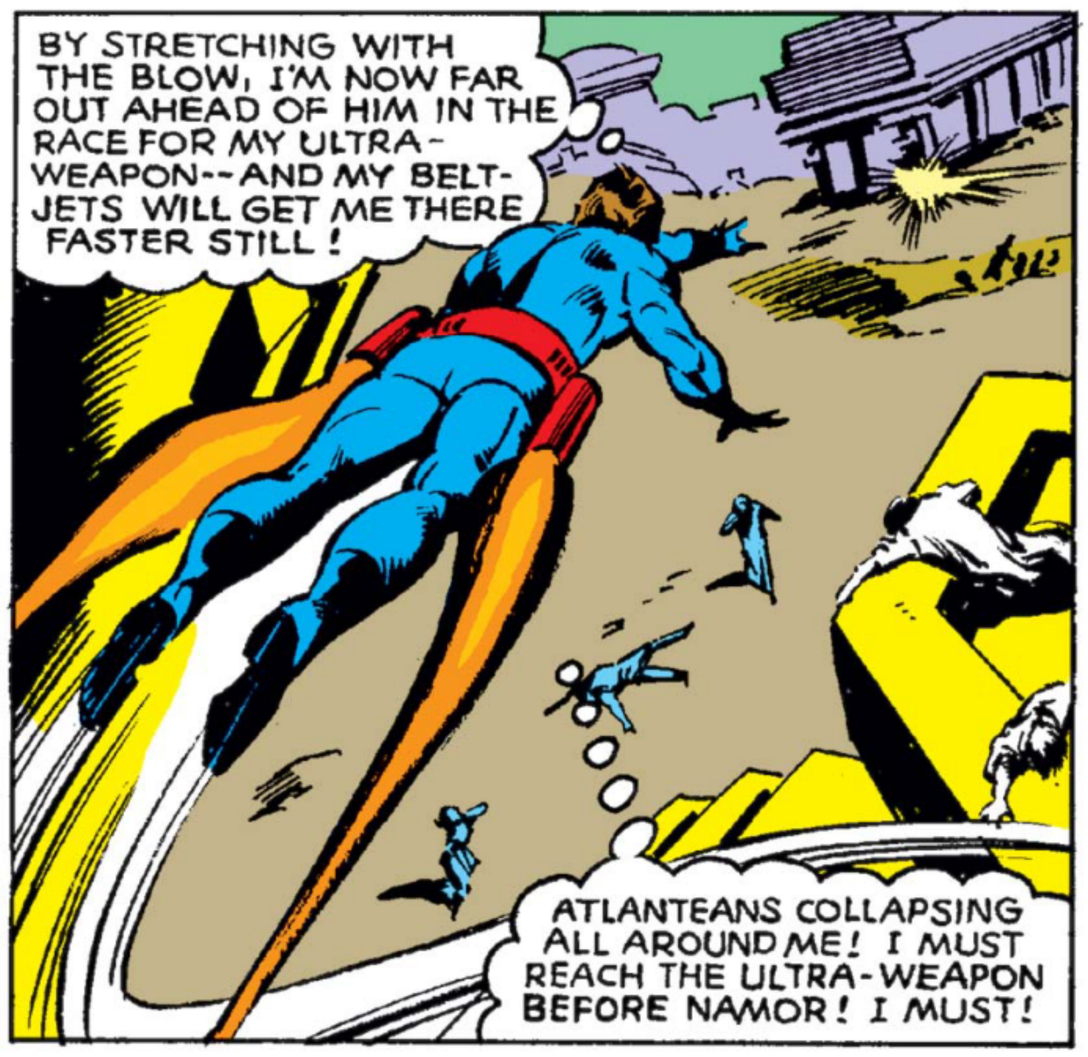
NO!
REMOVE YOUR HAND FROM MY PERSON, RICHARDS! NOW!

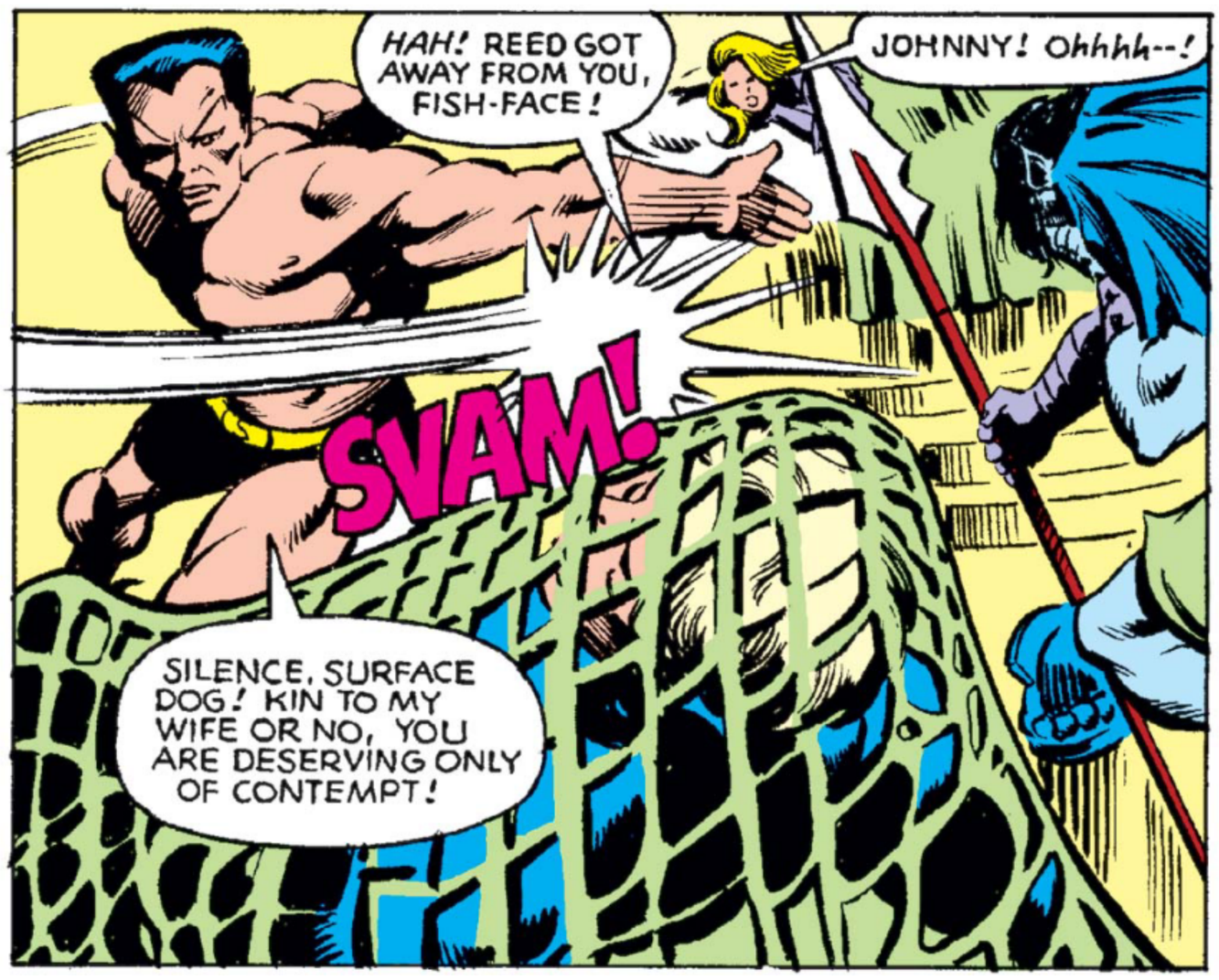

ON LAND OR UNDER THE SEA, ATLANTIS MUST NOT BE LEFT WITHOUT THE SUB-MARINER!
WARLORD KRANG, HOWEVER, IS FAR MORE EXPENDABLE!
"UNSEEN BY ALL, KRANG LEAVES THE ROYAL CHAMBER...


I-I'M SORRY, NAMOR, BUT I NOW KNOW WHAT MUST BE DONE!
THOK!
NEPTUNE'S TRIDENT!

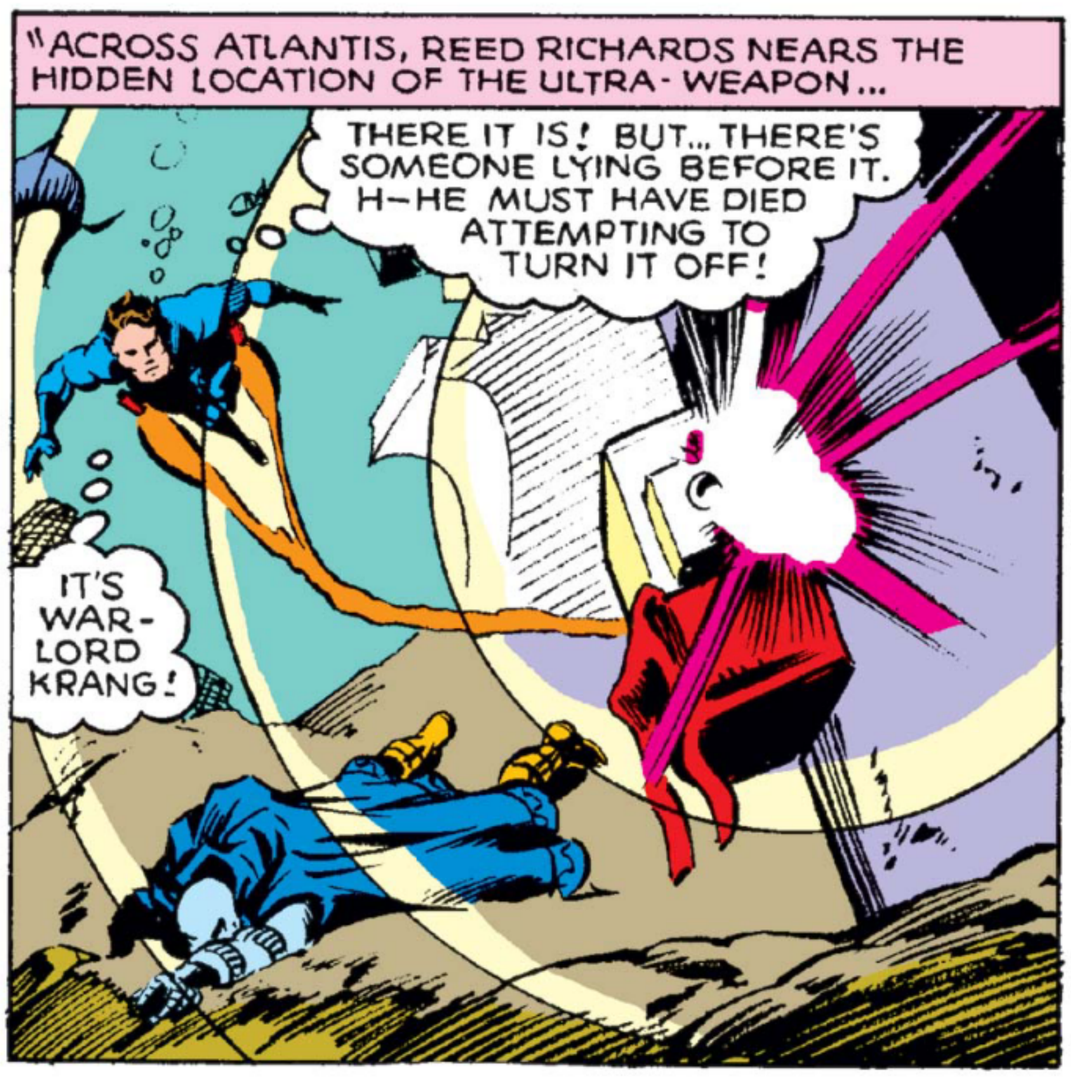

YOU STRUCK WHERE THE TORCH BURNED MY FLESH!
I DIDN'T KNOW-- BUT I HAD TO STOP YOU!

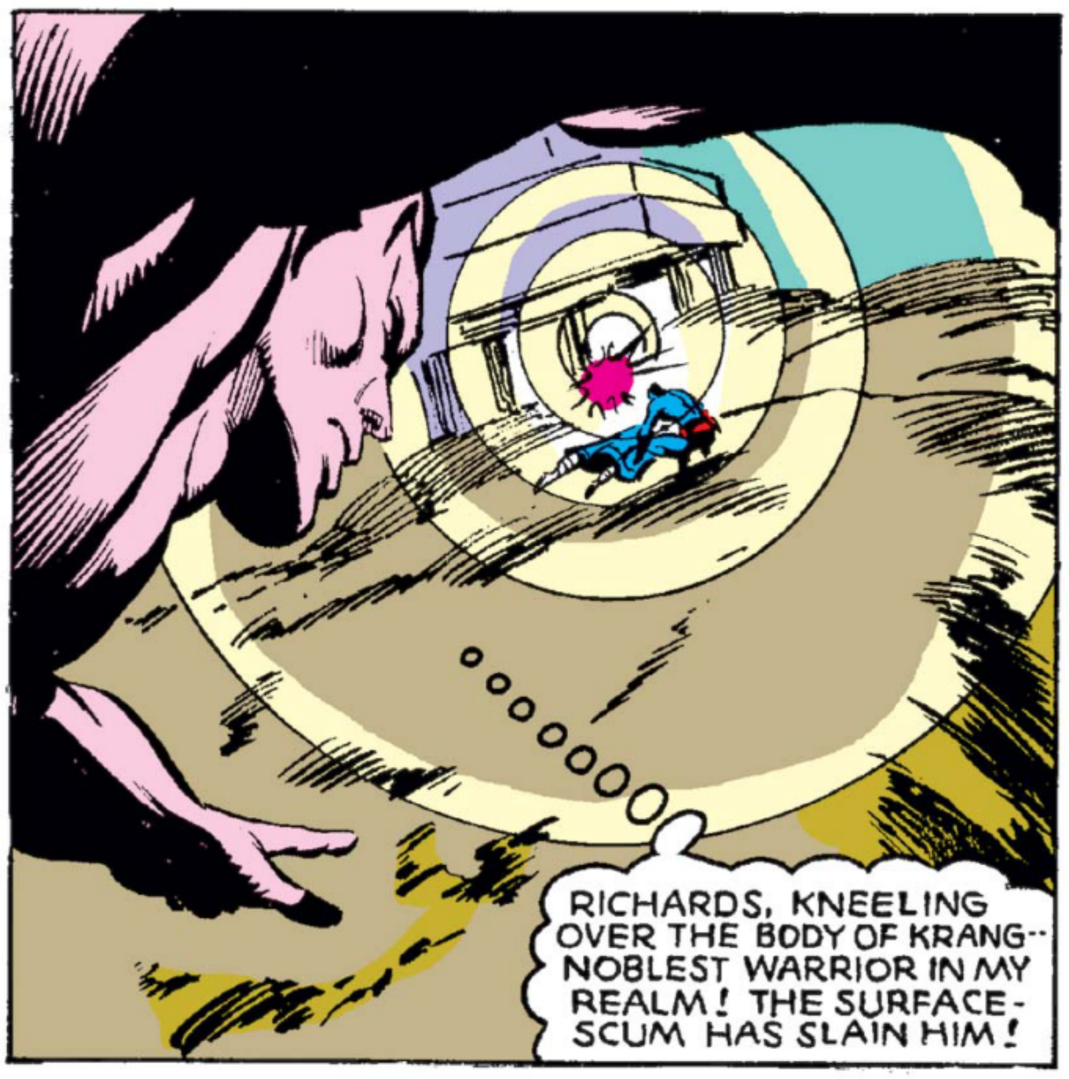
YOU PERSIST IN DOOMING ME AND MY KINGDOM! MADMAN! OUT OF NAMOR'S WAY!
GGNNGG!
N-NAMOR DOESN'T KNOW IT, BUT HE PLAYED DIRECTLY INTO MY HANDS BY SMASHING ME FROM THE ROYAL CHAMBER!


BY STRETCHING WITH THE BLOW, I'M NOW FAR OUT AHEAD OF HIM IN THE RACE FOR MY ULTRA-WEAPON--AND MY BELT-JETS WILL GET ME THERE FASTER STILL!
ATLANTEANS COLLAPSING ALL AROUND ME! I MUST REACH THE ULTRA-WEAPON BEFORE NAMOR! I MUST!


HAH! REED GOT AWAY FROM YOU, FISH-FACE!
JOHNNY! Ohhhh--!
SVAM!
SILENCE, SURFACE DOG! KIN TO MY WIFE OR NO, YOU ARE DESERVING ONLY OF CONTEMPT!

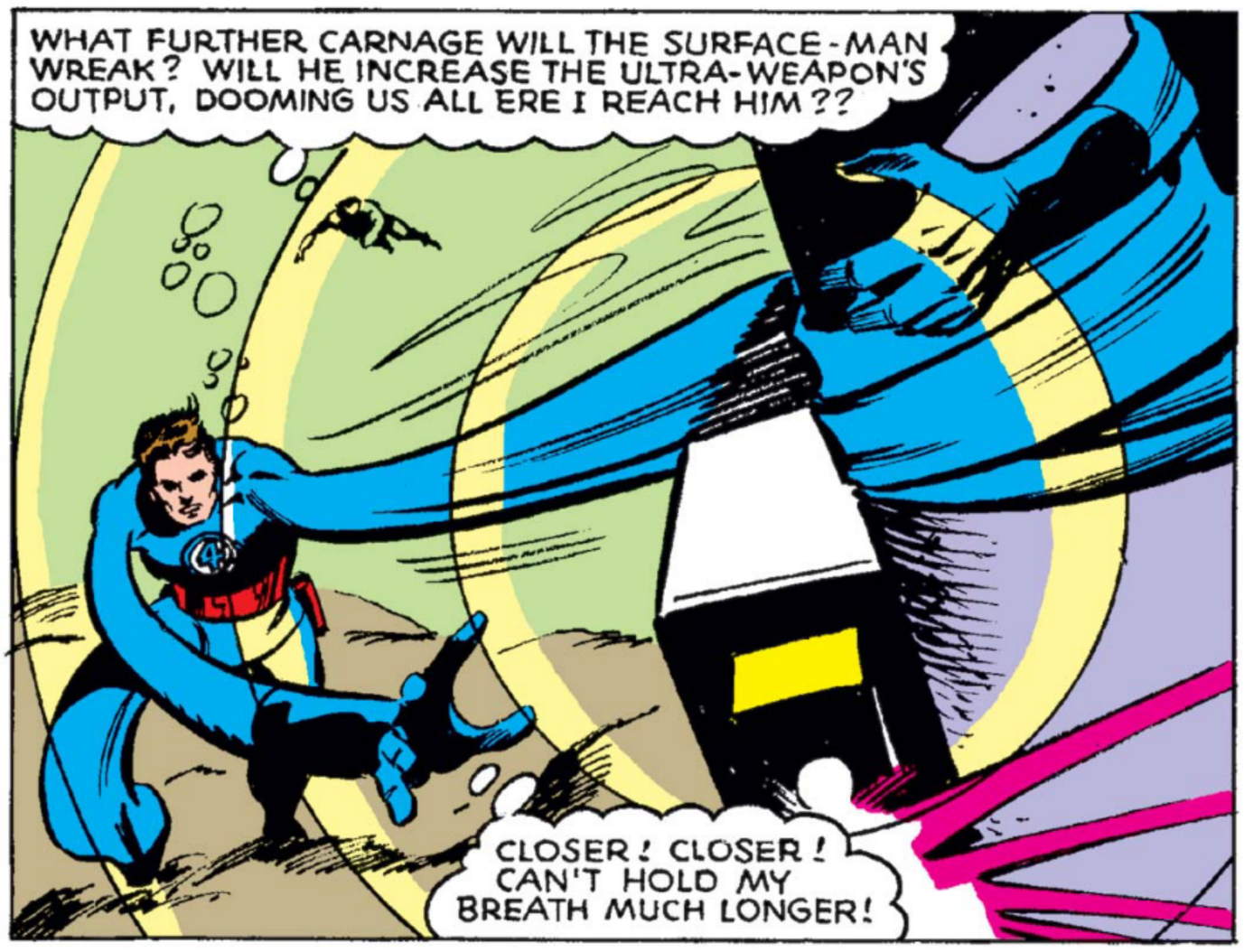
AND WHAT I SHALL DO TO BOTH RICHARDS AND YOU WHEN I RETURN IS TOO HORRIBLE EVEN TO CONTEMPLATE!
YOU WON'T RETURN, NAMOR! YOU'RE DOOMED!

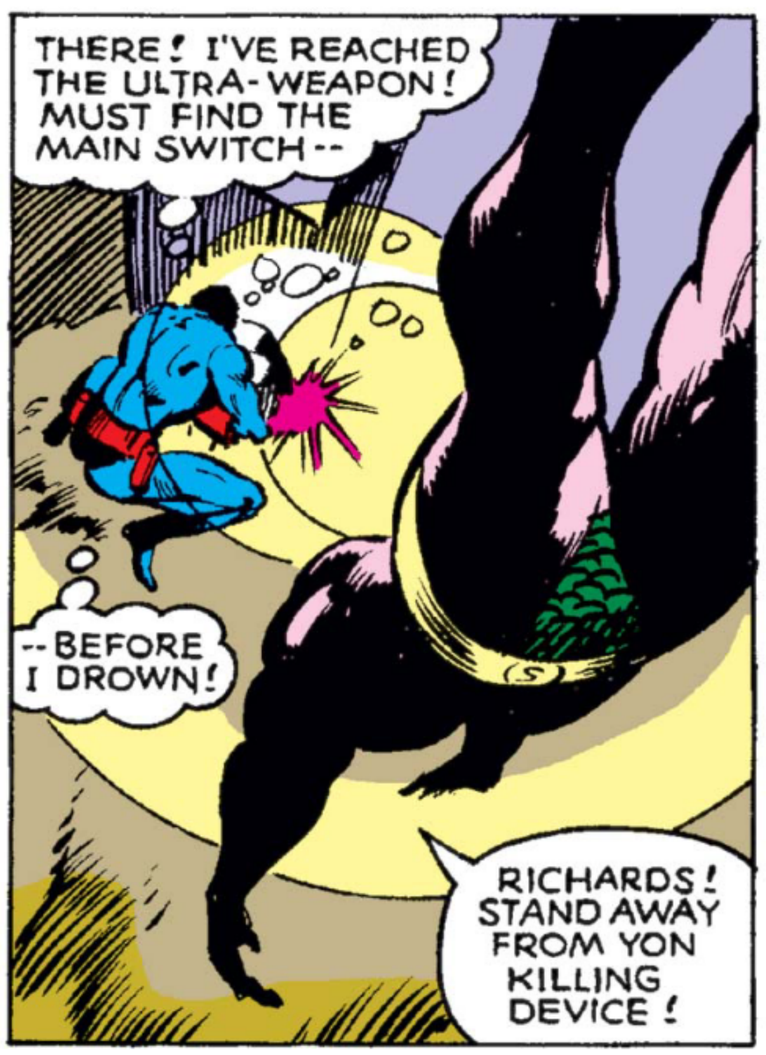

"ACROSS ATLANTIS, REED RICHARDS NEARS THE HIDDEN LOCATION OF THE ULTRA-WEAPON...
THERE IT IS! BUT... THERE'S SOMEONE LYING BEFORE IT. H-HE MUST HAVE DIED ATTEMPTING TO TURN IT OFF!
IT'S WAR-LORD KRANG!


RICHARDS, KNEELING OVER THE BODY OF KRANG--NOBLEST WARRIOR IN MY REALM! THE SURFACE-SCUM HAS SLAIN HIM!

T-THE ULTRA-WEAPON IS CANCELLING OUT THE OXYTABLET I TOOK EARLIER! WITHOUT IT, I CAN'T BREATHE UNDER-WATER! I-I'VE ONLY SECONDS LEFT...
...TO DO FOR ATLANTIS WHAT I WAS UNABLE TO DO FOR KRANG!

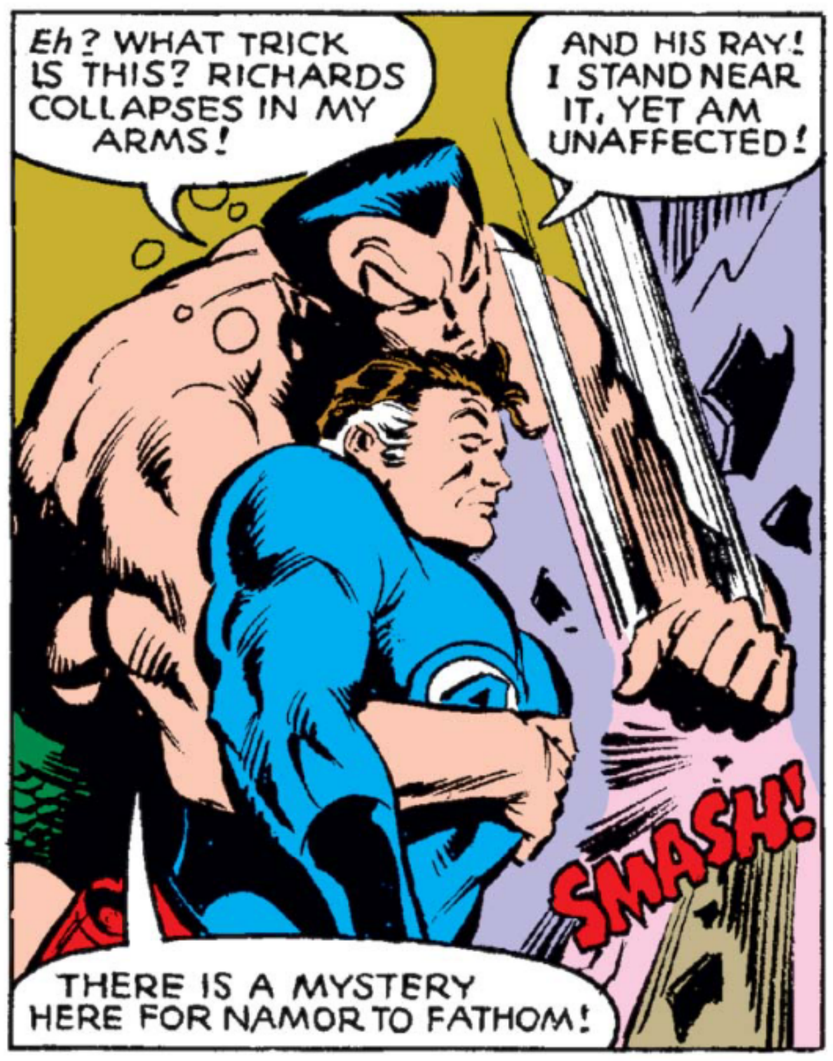
I MUST SWIM FASTER! FASTER!
MY PEOPLE FALL ALL AROUND ME, AND RICHARDS DRAWS EVER CLOSER TO HIS INFERNAL MACHINE!


WHAT FURTHER CARNAGE WILL THE SURFACE-MAN WREAK? WILL HE INCREASE THE ULTRA-WEAPON'S OUTPUT, DOOMING US ALL ERE I REACH HIM??
CLOSER! CLOSER! CAN'T HOLD MY BREATH MUCH LONGER!

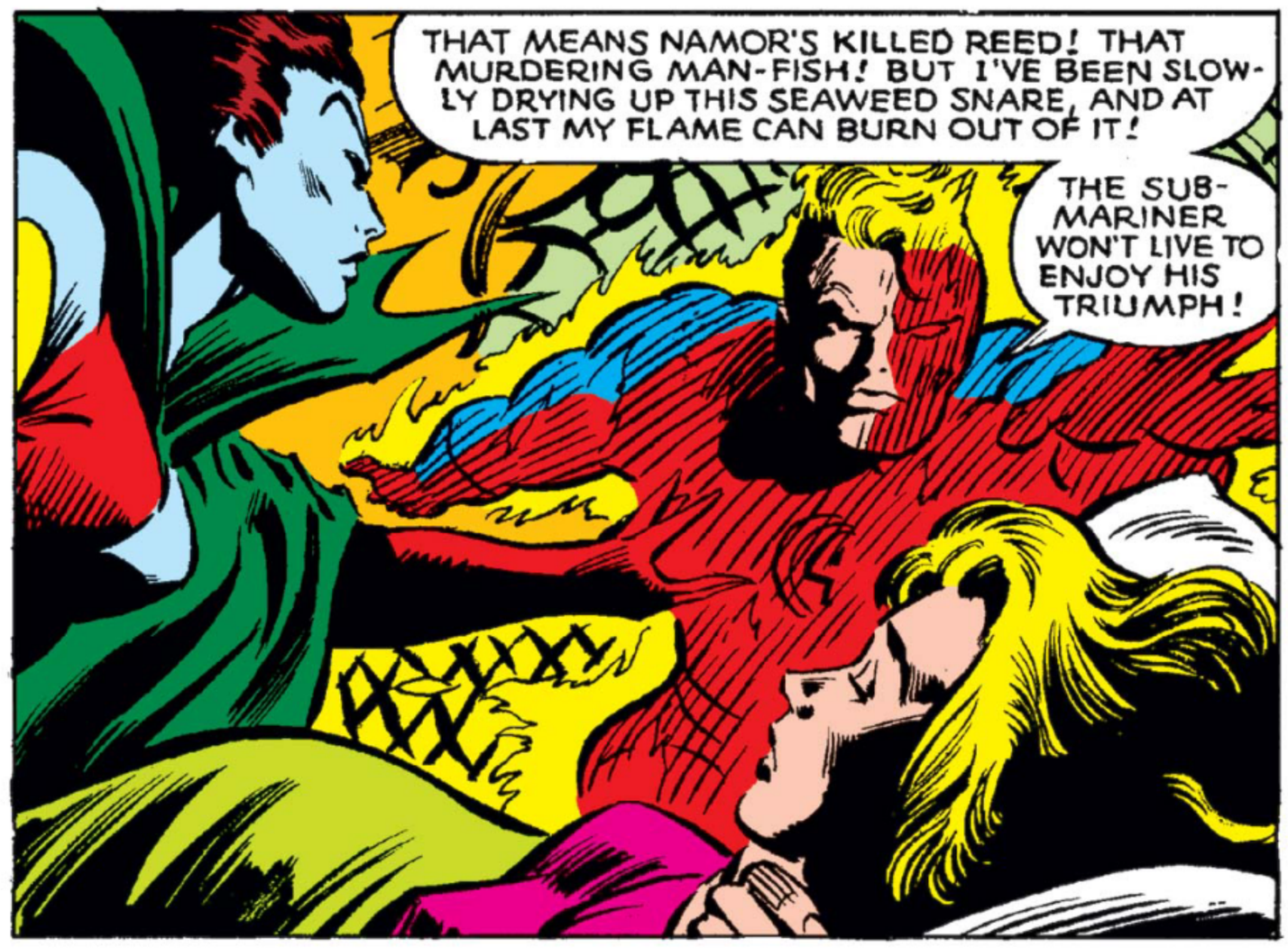

THERE! I'VE REACHED THE ULTRA-WEAPON! MUST FIND THE MAIN SWITCH--
--BEFORE I DROWN!
RICHARDS! STAND AWAY FROM YON KILLING DEVICE!

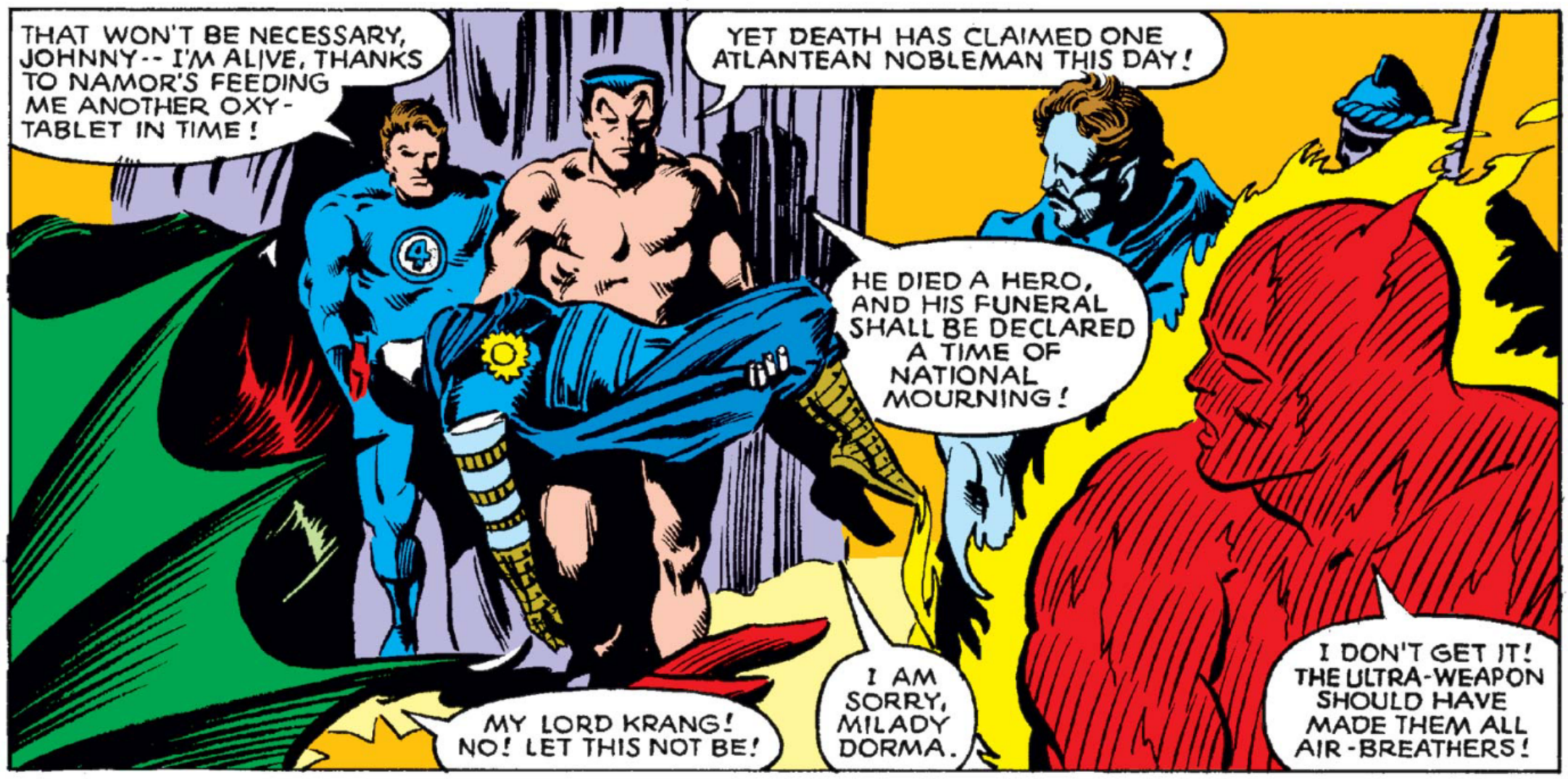
I HAVE WARNED YOU, SURFACE-SLAUGHTERER! NOW NAMOR WILL EXACT HIS REVENGE!
I-I DARE NOT OPEN MY MOUTH TO ANSWER HIM!
DARE NOT TELL HIM THE DANGER TO ATLANTIS IS PAST--

--THAT I CAME TO MY SENSES-- SHUT DOWN THE ULTRA-WEAPON IN TIME!
B-BUT IT'S ALL OVER FOR ME! I-I'M PAST HELP... NOW!


Eh? WHAT TRICK IS THIS? RICHARDS COLLAPSES IN MY ARMS!
AND HIS RAY! I STAND NEAR IT, YET AM UNAFFECTED!
SMASH!
THERE IS A MYSTERY HERE FOR NAMOR TO FATHOM!

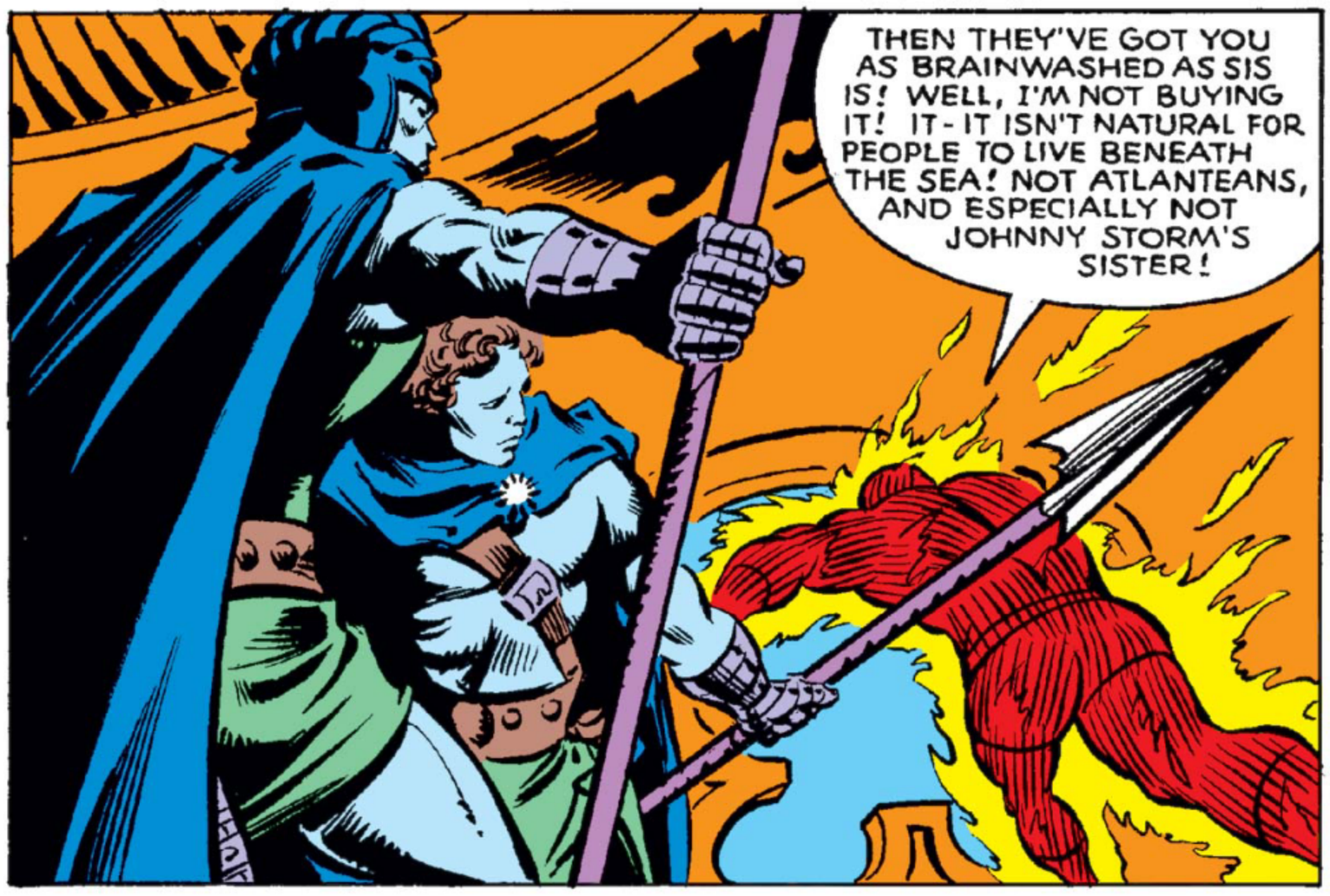
"THROUGHOUT NAMOR'S UNDERSEA REALM, ATLANTEANS FIND THEMSELVES BREATHING EASIER AGAIN...
THE DANGER IS PAST! NAMOR WAS TRIUMPHANT!


THAT MEANS NAMOR'S KILLED REED! THAT MURDERING MAN-FISH! BUT I'VE BEEN SLOWLY DRYING UP THIS SEAWEED SNARE, AND AT LAST MY FLAME CAN BURN OUT OF IT!
THE SUBMARINER WON'T LIVE TO ENJOY HIS TRIUMPH!


THAT WON'T BE NECESSARY, JOHNNY-- I'M ALIVE, THANKS TO NAMOR'S FEEDING ME ANOTHER OXY-TABLET IN TIME!
YET DEATH HAS CLAIMED ONE ATLANTEAN NOBLEMAN THIS DAY!
HE DIED A HERO, AND HIS FUNERAL SHALL BE DECLARED A TIME OF NATIONAL MOURNING!
MY LORD KRANG! NO! LET THIS NOT BE!
I AM SORRY, MILADY DORMA.
I DON'T GET IT! THE ULTRA-WEAPON SHOULD HAVE MADE THEM ALL AIR-BREATHERS!

UNLESS... SOMEBODY TURNED IT OFF! REED, WHY??
BECAUSE I WAS A FOOL, JOHNNY.
A FOOL WHO WOULD START A WAR--

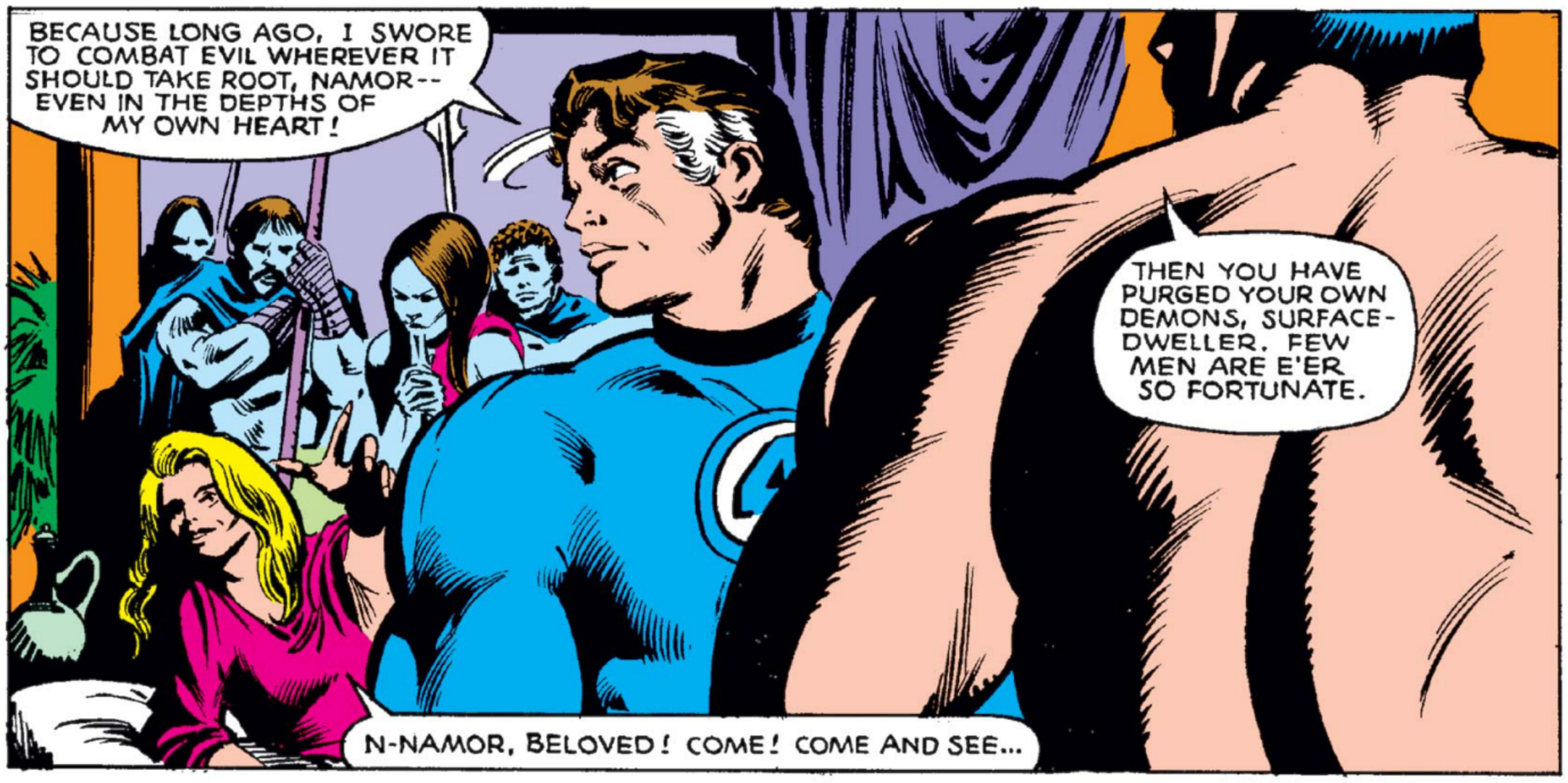
--RATHER THAN COME TO TERMS WITH REJECTION! SUE DOESN'T LOVE ME, SON-- NOT IN THE WAY SHE LOVES NAMOR! SHE CHOSE TO FIND HER HAPPINESS HERE, IN ATLANTIS, OF HER OWN FREE WILL!
NO-- SHE WAS FORCED INTO IT! TO KEEP NAMOR ON A LEASH!
NO, JOHNNY! NAMOR WOULD NEVER HAVE KEPT SUE BY FORCE-- NOR WOULD HE EVER ATTACK THE SURFACE WITHOUT PROVOCATION. I SEE THAT NOW.

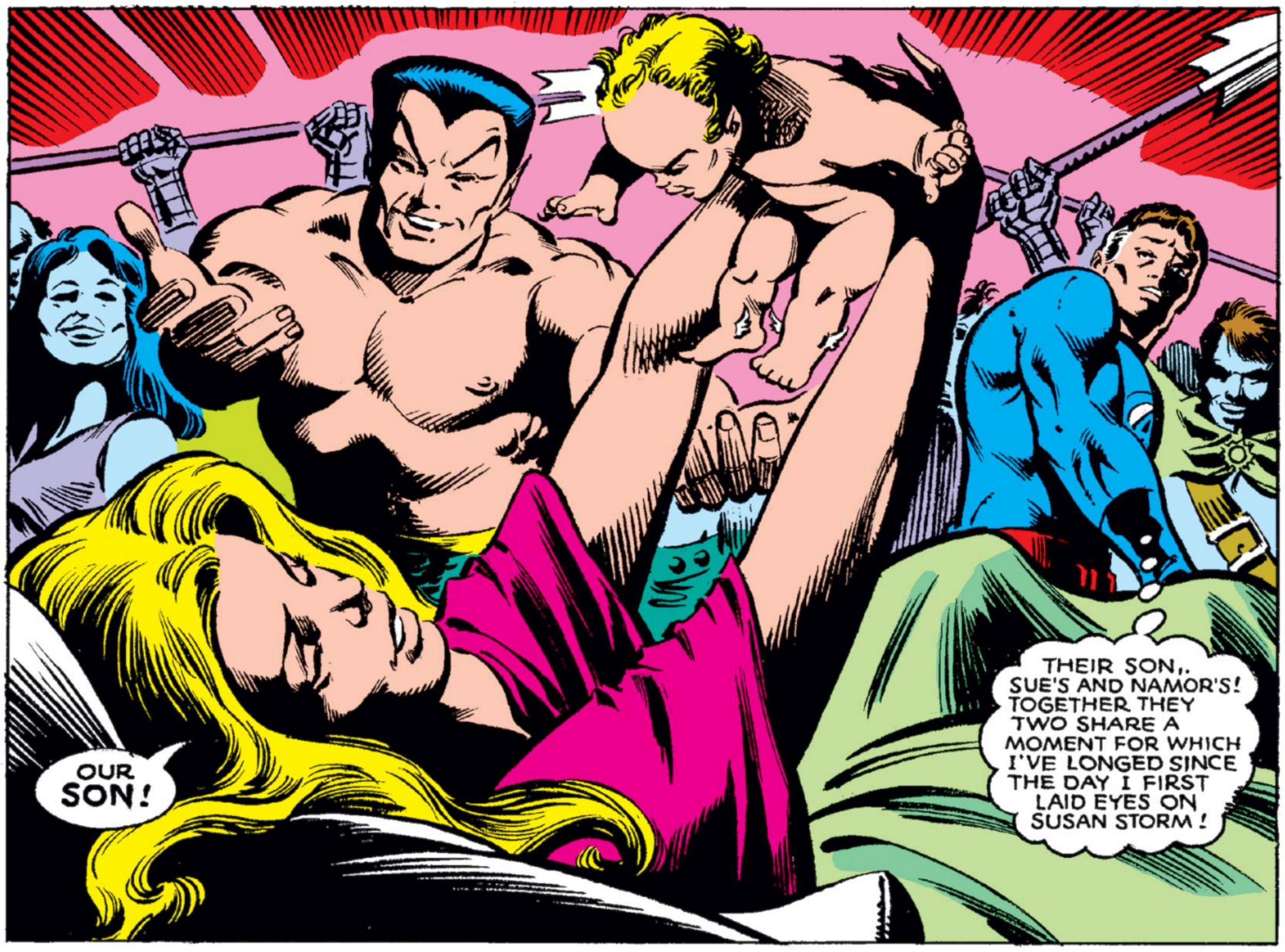

THEN THEY'VE GOT YOU AS BRAINWASHED AS SIS IS! WELL, I'M NOT BUYING IT! IT - IT ISN'T NATURAL FOR PEOPLE TO LIVE BENEATH THE SEA! NOT ATLANTEANS, AND ESPECIALLY NOT JOHNNY STORM'S SISTER!

MAYBE I CAN'T TAKE HER OUT OF HERE ALONE NOW THAT YOU'VE ABANDONED ME, REED, BUT MARK MY WORDS!
ONE DAY THE HUMAN TORCH WILL BE BACK--
--TO RAIN FIRE ON ATLANTIS!

NOT ALL THE FIRE IN HELL ITSELF CAN BURN THE GRIEF FROM MY HEART!
LADY DORMA, I--
WHAT COMFORT WILL YOU OFFER HER, RICHARDS? YOU, WHOSE RAGE CAUSED HER BELOVED'S DEATH?

YOU CAME AS AN ENEMY, INTENT ON DESTROYING THAT WHICH YOU COULD NOT UNDERSTAND. YET, IT WAS ALSO YOUR ACTIONS WHICH SAVED ATLANTIS--
--THOUGH IT HAS COST YOU FOREVER ANY HOPE OF EVER REGAINING THE WOMAN YOU LOVE. WHY, RICHARDS?


BECAUSE LONG AGO, I SWORE TO COMBAT EVIL WHEREVER IT SHOULD TAKE ROOT, NAMOR-- EVEN IN THE DEPTHS OF MY OWN HEART!
THEN YOU HAVE PURGED YOUR OWN DEMONS, SURFACE-DWELLER. FEW MEN ARE E'ER SO FORTUNATE.
N-NAMOR, BELOVED! COME! COME AND SEE...


OUR SON!
THEIR SON,. SUE'S AND NAMOR'S! TOGETHER THEY TWO SHARE A MOMENT FOR WHICH I'VE LONGED SINCE THE DAY I FIRST LAID EYES ON SUSAN STORM!

AND NOW THAT MOMENT, FOR ME, WILL NEVER COME!
BELOVED SUSAN! ON THIS DAY SHALL ALL ATLANTIS REJOICE!
AND ALL THE EARTH AS WELL, NAMOR! PROMISE ME!

I'LL PROMISE YOU THAT, SUE! I SWEAR THAT, FOR THE REST OF MY LIFE, I'LL DO EVERYTHING IN MY POWER TO SEE TO IT THAT THERE'S PEACE BETWEEN THE SURFACE-WORLD AND ATLANTIS!

THUS WERE THE FATES OF THE FANTASTIC FOUR AND THE SUB-MARINER ON A WORLD A WHISPER AWAY FROM THE ONE YOU KNOW...
BUT WHETHER THE TORCH CARRIED OUT HIS THREAT OR REED RICHARDS HIS PROMISE AS NAMOR AND SUE'S SON GREW TO MANHOOD BENEATH THE WAVES IS ANOTHER STORY... FOR ANOTHER TIME.
THE END.

WHY NOT?

c/o MARVEL COMICS GROUP
575 Madison Avenue
New York, New York 10022

DENNIS O'NEIL
EDITOR
MARK GRUENWALD
ASSISTANT EDITOR

As much as we like to print a balanced assortment of letters pro and con on a given story, sometimes that becomes impossible. Case in point: WHAT IF #18's "What If Dr. Strange Became a Disciple of Dormammu?" As far as our letters went, there wasn't a single person out there in Marveldom who didn't like at least something about the Gillis—Sutton—Patterson masterwork... and several of you hailed it as one of the best WHAT IFs to be told by Uatu the Watcher yet! Witness...

Dear Marvel,

In the short eighteen-issue history of WHAT IF, there have been few classics. The Marvel Bullpen story — maybe. The Conan story — good chance. But WHAT IF #18 was excellent. I've now read it about six times, and I show no signs of letting up. Why is it so good? Stripped to its bones, the story is a simple morality play, good versus evil in its purest (or basest) sense. But beyond that...

One of the major problems with a series such as WHAT IF is that the reader must be at least peripherally familiar with the series in question. And the story presented, because it is a single issue story, must present every element that is crucial to the denouement. In other words, a hodge-podge of trivia from past issues (in the case of the FF, Avengers, even Dr. Strange, we're talking about over 100 issues) must be condensed — and furthermore, twisted — into one giant story. Furthermore, most of the stories have taken on the "Imaginary Story" premise introduced in an issue of SUPERMAN in the early 60's, where despite all the machinations along the way, the end result is the same. The Dr. Strange story is no exception. Then what makes this issue so much better than most?

The difference may be in tone. We are introduced to the characters as confidants... people looking in who cannot affect a situation we know in our hearts is radically wrong. The most effective panel in the issue is the one where Strange says "I will serve Dormammu!" and the Ancient One, looking on in his crystal, says "My worst fears have been realized!" The impact of that shot is astounding. We are allowed to feel this sense of wrongness that has changed a familiar situation (Strange on the side of good) to a nightmarisn and deadly one (Strange on the side of evil). And the story does not stop there.

Overall, we are presented with a scenario stripped to the essentials: a morality play. There are only two segments that do not totally work: the council of sorcerers and the Doctor Doom scene. The council is a problem because of what I stated above — unfamiliarity with past continuity. I had heard of the Genghis once so I was prepared for his antics. But aside from Victoria Bentley and Wong, the others — especially Dr. Druid, were mysteries to me. Granted, they worked in the story, but they did not work for familiarity. The Doctor Doom segment simply did not fit in — it is inconsistent with the methods of the Ancient One, in particular his offer to restore Doom's face *before* Doom accepted to be his pupil. Although I'd have preferred the sequence removed from the story, it is but a trifle in such a successful epic.

Artwise, Tom Sutton has rarely turned in such a concise story. The Ditko-like Dark Dimension, recognizable characters, and the Sutton cartoonish brilliance were unified and tempered by Bruce Patterson's inks. Patterson has become a solid utility inker in that he has yet to develop an overpowering style; he simply tempers the artistic waywardness of certain pencilers. And Tom Orz's lettering hit the spot.

Peter Gillis, apart from the competent plot discussed above, your dialogue-writing is a joy. It is brief, clean (no stuttering on the past of characters) and most important, plot-advancing. There is not a single panel that does not advance the story — and as stated before, that is crucial in a one-shot story. The tale has captured my imagination, and forced me to read it over and over again. Congratulations to all concerned.

Thank you again for this very important issue. If only they could all be like this.

Mark Zutkoff
2302 Chetwood Circle Apt. 304
Timonium, MD 21093

We're trying, Mark, you can count on that. And we think we're getting a firmer grasp of what makes a good WHAT IF all the time. Peter, Tom, and Bruce thank you for your letter of appreciation; each one of them put their best into the tale.

Oh yes, since you brought it up, we'd like to use this opportunity to clear up once and for all what the difference is between an "Imaginary Story" and an "Alternate Reality Story." In a nutshell, an Imaginary Tale can proceed from any premise whatsoever, no matter how absurd, with no thought to how a given situation came about. A tale of an Alternate Universe must proceed logically from an established event, preferably one that was shown on panel, by changing a single variable and following its consequence. Hence, a premise such as "What if Thor were the Son of Zeus instead of Odin?" is an imaginary tale, not one that could in any way have occurred without invalidating much of the Marvel mythos. Granted, we may not have always been as faithful to the Alternate Reality premise as we should have, but we promise from here on in to pay strict attention. It is true that some of our Alternate World stories have ended in a similar manner to the Mainstream World versions, but more often than not they haven't. Our major criterion, of course, is that the ending be both logical and aesthetically satisfying. Speaking of which... ——mg

Dear Alternate Myth-Makers,

"What If Dr. Strange were a Disciple of Dormammu?" gave the most satisfying answer to a provocative query of all the stories in the WHAT IF series. Peter Gillis's story was so full of wonder that if Chris Claremont ever stops writing Doc's regular magazine, please give Gillis the assignment! Until now, the Ancient One has never been given a full character portrayal as not merely the frail, token mentor, but as an effective, powerful wizard, like Gandalf in stature. Dr. Strange was marvelously perfidious as the opportunistic black sorcerer. But, even after the reform, I'm still not sure that I'd want him as Sorcerer Supreme in *my* universe. Maybe turncoat politicians have made me cynical.

Tom Sutton's art is always thought-provoking, and it has never looked better than with Bruce Patterson's inks. Not only graphically strong, it gave a wonderful story-book feeling that really set the tone. And with all proper Dr. Strange stories, it evoked the surreal alternate universes of Steve Ditko.

And after all this praise, alas!, this classic is only one issue. I'd really like to see it keep on going

Leighton Ku
1801 Fairview St.
Berkeley, CA 94703

Well, Leighton, sequels are not out of the question here in WHAT IF, as this issue's sequel to WHAT IF #1 attests. How about the rest of you out there? Anyone else care to see the further adventures of the dark Dr. Strange? Peter Gillis' brain has wilder things in it than your typical witch's brew. In other words, we already heard him mumbling his ideas for a sequel! ——mg.

Dear Mark,

Although I am no great Dr. Strange freak, I still enjoyed WHAT IF #18. That's because, despite the mystical trappings, I know a good script and knockout art when I see them.

The story was set on an appropriately large scale. My attitude toward cosmic epics is that they must involve the human, personal element, or else they wash right over me. That element was evident here. Also, having seen one of our Doc's brawls with Umar, seeing them as lovers was quite a shock, and served as another example of the "get it out of the system" function of this book.

And the art — some of the best I've ever seen in WHAT IF — absolutely striking. The art alone would put this in the ranks of one of the best issues to date, but the script was just as good. Consider the positions of the two main creators on this book: Tom Sutton, an acknowledged talent who has largely chucked the monthly grind, and Peter Gillis, an underused newcomer whose first two stories, like this one, show strong talent. WHAT IF is the perfect showcase for these types. Please continue in your never-ending search

for the best talent available, and please continue to turn out WHAT IFs as good as this one.

Roy Veldboom
RR #1
Cedar Grove, WI 53013

You're right, Roy, WHAT IF is one of the few showcase books Marvel has for both new talent and established veterans with spare time. We're trying our darnedest to get together the ideal creative teams to do each of our cosmic concepts right, which means we often have to work around the schedules of our writers and artists. We want you to not only expect excellence from each and every issue of WHAT IF, but a brand-new look to every story. ——mg.

HOW ABOUT?

WHAT IF... Ben Grimm was no longer the Thing? (A sequel to MARVEL TWO-IN-ONE #50).
——Dennis Mason, Conshohocken, PA

WHAT IF... the Fantastic Four all acquired the Same Power?
WHAT IF...the Original Human Torch had never become the Vision?
WHAT IF... Quicksilver and the Scarlet Witch had joined the X-Men?
——Roger Schoolcraft, Follansbee, WV

WHAT IF... an Earth man had become the herald to Galactus?
WHAT IF... the Beatles had become the Fantastic Four? **(You mean they weren't?——mg.)**
——Gary Dunaier, Flushing, NY

WHAT IF... Aunt May knew Peter Parker was Spider-Man?
WHAT IF... Captain America hadn't gone into suspended animation?
WHAT IF... the Silver Surfer had never left Galactus?
WHAT IF... Galactus destroyed Earth and took the FF as heralds?
WHAT IF... Luke Cage was a criminal?
WHAT IF... Daredevil lost his super-senses? **(Then he'd just be blind.——mg.)**
——Todd Benedict, Seattle, WA

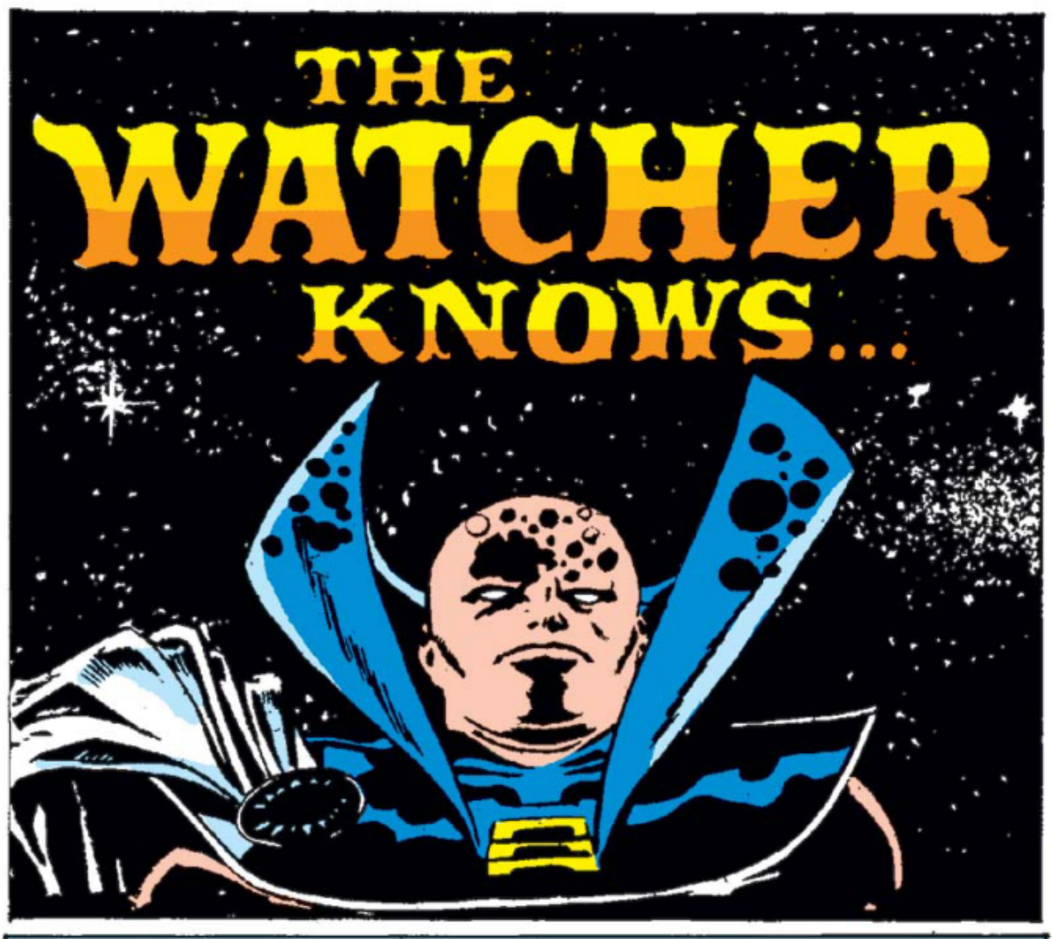
WHAT IF... Henry Pym became Yellowjacket first instead of Ant-Man?
——Diek Wheeler, Austin, TX

WHAT IF... Galactus invaded Asgard?
WHAT IF... Kull lived in the time of Conan or vice versa?
WHAT IF... Dracula joined the X-Men? **(He's not a mutant; he wouldn't qualify. ——mg.)**
WHAT IF... The Inhumans were villains? **(Some are; the Royal Family, however, is quite moral and it's hard to imagine what would have made them otherwise.——mg.)**
WHAT IF... Ragnarok finally happened? **(That story was told in THOR #200. ——mg.)**
WHAT IF... Sif replaced Thor as an Avenger?
WHAT IF... Victor Von Doom had not been accident-scarred? **(This premise is in the works for next issue. ——mg.)**
——Robert S. Smith, No address given.

WHAT IF... the original X-Men had never quit?
——John B. Lawton III, Las Vegas, NV

WHAT IF... Gwen Stacy hadn't died? **(This one is in the works. ——mg.)**
WHAT IF... the Silver Surfer hadn't lost his space-spanning powers?
WHAT IF... the Silver Surfer joined the Fantastic Four?
WHAT IF... Bêlit hadn't died in CONAN #100?
WHAT IF... Peter Parker hadn't lost those four extra arms in SPIDER-MAN #100?
WHAT IF... All of Marvel's villains teamed up to battle all of Marvel's heroes?
WHAT IF... the Fantastic Four never regrouped?
——Ralph Fontcuberta, Kenner, LA

Keep those premises coming in, friends! You're bound to think of some we haven't. Oh yes, please do *not* send us requests for WHAT IFs concerning any of our *licensed* characters (STAR WARS, STAR TREK, BATTLESTAR, MICRONAUTS, SHOGUN WARRIORS, ROM) since we do not have the rights to do stories about them in any other magazine but their own. Okay? ——mg.



For your entertainment and enlightenment, we proudly present another exciting new regular feature for WHAT IF's Back Pages. In this section, Marvel-Earth's very own Watcher will answer your questions about reality and the Marvel Universe. After all, he knows all the answers since he's been observing since long before the dawn of man. To give you an idea of what sort of questions The Watcher will address, we are presenting the following queries culled from the minds of the bullpen. Next time, it's your turn. Take it away, Uatu...

What is the connection between Kull's surface Atlantis and Sub-Mariner's undersea Atlantis?
The land continent of Atlantis that existed in King Kull's era 15,000 years ago sank in a catacylsmic shifting of the Earth. The water-breathing ancestors of Prince Namor founded their nation on the ruins of the original Atlantis and took its name. ——The Watcher.

Did you create the mysterious Blue Area of the Moon in which you now live?
No, the Blue Area containing a city and an atmosphere was constructed by the Kree long before human life existed on Earth in order to prove to the Skrulls that they were worthy of the secret of interstellar travel. ——The Watcher.

Why did you look different in your first appearance in FF #13 than you do now?
I am able to control the perceptions of lesser minds. I wished to appear more forbidding and alien at my first meeting with the Fantastic Four than I later chose to. ——The Watcher.

Is there any difference between a parallel Earth and an alternate Earth, or are they the same thing?
They are different. Alternate Earths diverge from one another at certain critical points. Parallel Earths evolve similarly but independently, without divergent points. The Earth I observe is part of an Alternate Earth system. ——The Watcher.

Do dimensions like Dormammu's diverge just like alternate Earths?
Yes. All realities diverge, with the exception of timeless Limbo, which is not a part of any system of realitites, but is common to them all. ——The Watcher.

Who are the Elders of the Universe?
They are an ancient race of immortals, older than the Watchers themselves. Each Elder's power is on a cosmic level, and he or she uses it to pursue esoteric ends. So far of all the Elders only the Grandmaster, the Collector, and the Gardener have happened upon Earth. Others will doubtlessly be encountered in the future. ——The Watcher.

That's all for this time, friends. Get busy and send us your WHAT IF story suggestions, your questions for the Watcher, and, oh yes — you might even tell us what you thought of this issue's titanic tale! ——mg.